Pearls of His Presence

Intimate Devotions for the Spirtually Hungry

Steve Porter

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DEDICATION

Wade E. Taylor

(August 24, 1924 - February 29, 2012)

Words can not express how much I miss you. Wade, you were a true spiritual father, you were always just a phone call away, your prayers were powerful and your love always felt. It brings me to tears every time I think about the difference you made in my life over the 20 + years I had known you. I will see you again in eternity. I promise to make you proud as I run my race.

Draw me, we will run after thee: the king hath brought me into his chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine: the upright love thee (Song of Solomon 1:4).

For I hear the Lord whisper: "For even the greatest hunger that you have possessed in your past will only be the starting point of the hunger that I will give you. For I am placing a great hunger in the heart of my bride and she will not be content with 'things' but only my 'face' ...I am calling you deeper today says the Lord! Will you cry out to me with all your heart?"

Acknowledgements

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Special thanks most of all to our Beloved Daddy God, who holds us so close in the palm of His hand.

To my family: Dad, Mom and twin sister Stacey who have surrounded me with such love and support over the years.

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FOREWORD

by Nancy Taylor Warner

As I sat down with Steve's book, even before I began to read, a song began to sing in my heart. It's an old favorite; you may know the words. It speaks of coming into the garden alone with the Lord, and of the sweetness of intimate fellowship with Him, as the Lord makes Himself and His love known through quality times spent alone with Him, in His presence.

I say "quality" times, because we are to live every moment of every day in fellowship with the Lord. Yet, there are also to be those quality times set apart, times of deeper fellowship with the Lord, when we become quiet and focused so we can better receive from Him.

As I began to read *Pearls of His Presence,* I understood why this song rang so readily in my heart —because this is what this devotional is all about. From the place of his deep spiritual hunger, Steve shares prayers we can identify with and pray too, then encourages us with "pearls of wisdom" he has received while spending time with the Lord, that we too might move into deeper oneness with Him.

As we spend time with the Lord, truths we have understood will progressively unfold in our hearts, becoming part of the very fiber of our being. This is the longing of the Lord today, a people who will desire this deeper identification and walk with Him.

I found this book is best read slowly and prayerfully. Through Steve's prayers and words of encouragement, a deep inner hunger for the Lord is imparted. I encourage you to, day by day, take time to consider and reflect, praying into what is being shared, that the Holy Spirit might draw you into ever closer fellowship with Himself. May these attitudes, prayers, and words of wisdom sink deep into your heart and find expression in your life.

"Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." (Psalm 42:7)

May the deep in the heart of God find fellowship with the depths in you. As you take time to rest in His presence, may you hear Him speak in the stillness. As you seek the Lord, may you experience Him not only in the secret place, but in your life circumstances. May you find strength through God's word as He continues to reveal Himself to you, making His heart and His ways known to you.

"Yet the Lord will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life." (Psalm 42:8)

May the Lord bless you through these prayers and pearls of wisdom; may His song come forth in your life in new ways, as each day, you continue to lift your heart toward Him.

Introduction

The Lord has prepared a table for those who are hungry for more of Him. He stands bidding us to be partakers of His holy presence. He is calling those who want to move past the holy place through the veil into the Holy of Holies.

A deep longing is being birthed in the heart of His bride for divine encounters of the God kind, not seeking His hands but His face. He has opened the door to the secret place to us.

Can we experience the same atmosphere as from the throne room? Does God desire for His manifest presence to invade this earth? Yes! God is pouring out His spirit upon the spiritually thirsty and the spiritually discontent.

"**I love them that love me. Those that search for me will surely find me"** (Proverbs 8:17).

Divine mysteries are now being revealed. Kingdom revelation is being imparted into the lives of those who hunger for the deeper realms of God. God's secrets are being whispered into the discerning ears of His bride—for those who wait for Him in the secret place.

The Holy Spirit longs to impart pearls of wisdom to the people of God—truth that will change our lives and empower us to move in harmony with Him. The wise man searches far and wide for a rare and precious pearl. What would you do—to what lengths would you go in search of such a priceless treasure? In the same way, pearls of wisdom found in the secret place will bring spirit and life—fresh impartation of who God is and who we are in Him. They have the power to transform our hearts and take us to the next level of intimacy with God.

In my new devotional, *Pearls of His Presence*, I share little pearls of wisdom I gleaned while spending time resting in the manifest presence of the Lord. My prayer is that a deep hunger for God will be placed in your heart while you read. May you be caught up into a higher realm of the glory!

The Lord creates spiritual hunger. When we come to the Lord, we must first acknowledge our need. Pray with me this special prayer prayed many times by the beloved Wade Taylor.

"Lord, I desire You to work within me, to draw me to Yourself, to cause me to become that which You would have me to be. Lord, wherever it may lead or whatever it may cost, draw me, and in every aspect of my being, I will run after you."

TURN YOUR HEAD

Turn your head, precious one; He is looking your way with eyes full of love. One look will transform your life. His head is turned toward you now. When you look at Him, you steal His heart. Can you see Him? With arms open, He desires to embrace you and tenderly take you away in His presence. Take the hand of the Master, for He is waiting for you in the secret place!

I sense the Lord say:

"Do you really relate to Me only because of My blessing, but keep your distance, refusing to come any closer? Don't be afraid to come closer, through the doorway to the secret place where you can meet Me face to face and have a personal visitation from a very personal Christ."

"Will you look over and see Me standing alone? Will you keep Me standing there or bid Me come and sit with you awhile? For it's only in sweet, intimate fellowship that I reveal Myself to you. I don't want you to be content to hear the stories about me; I want you to discover Me for yourself."

The omnipresence is an open doorway leading us into His manifest presence where we meet Him as a person and have a personal visitation from a personal Christ.

TEACH US TO PRAY

Lord, teach us to really pray out of desperation for You! May we not just utter rehearsed words apart from fully engaged hearts. Remind us not to pray from our heads but from the very core of our being! Light our hearts on fire with divine love for you. May that love come forth with unction of the Spirit that others will be drawn to You—even by our example. When we pray, let our words hold a depth of passion, a profound richness of spirit, and make a sound that resonates in heaven. Lord, teach us to pray even as You prayed: "Our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be your name." Lord, I do not want to pray intellectual prayers that are born from the flesh but rather anointed prayers perfumed by the Holy Spirit of God Himself. When I pray, I reach down into the depths of my spirit and allow those words to form—Your words—Your heart. Let my prayer burst forth and shake the world for You. The world rarely sees what happens when someone cries out with deep hunger from the depths of his heart, but when they do, they stop, they pause, they listen—and they want GOD!

HE WILL ORDER YOUR STEPS

If you're not resting in God, if you're not committing, delighting, and trusting in the Lord, then you will be angry and frustrated, and you will fret. Wait patiently before Him, because the only thing God has to do is speak forth

that word and you will find rescue. No matter what you are going through, you can walk on water the way Peter did; you will not drown, you will not be despised, you will not be rejected. It doesn't matter if you're in your tomb or you think you're getting ready to die. God's hand is upon you. He is speaking forth the Word. Your steps are being ordered. If you are a **"righteous man (or woman)"** He will order your steps, so that you can walk safely hand in hand with the Lover of your soul—Jesus (Pslams 37:23).

I WANT YOU 24/7

We love our watches, don't we? What if the Lord doesn't come after five minutes of waiting? Do we give up and grow weary and go on to the next activity? If we don't see results after an hour, do we become so discouraged that we throw in the towel? I often ask myself to consider whether this is something that's so deep on the inside of me that I can't help but call out to Him, "Jesus, son of David, come into my life and move by your Spirit. Come by your Spirit and talk to me! Come by your Spirit and walk through my home. I want you 24/7, Jesus, to come and turn my life upside down!"

I sense the Lord saying:

"I long to see you lay prostrate before Me with your arms open wide, asking Me to touch you once more..."

WITHDRAWING

In Scripture, we often see Jesus withdrawing from the crowds to be alone with His Father. We too must discipline ourselves to withdraw from the public and sit in anticipation before Him. In the sitting we learn the ways of God. He speaks to us, sharing intimate secrets regarding who He is.

THE BEAUTY OF MEEKNESS

The barren winter is over and the singing of the birds has come.

A new song is sung in sweet harmony with the Father.

Behold His Bride perfumed by His presence,

For God moves through a vessel that has been beautifully broken.

Your Beloved Lord makes you clean,

Clothing you in pure, holy white.

He claims you as His own.

Coals of fire touch you from His altar,

As on bended knee you remain,

For it is there that you are changed.

There you lean upon Him, when He offers you His arm.

In that place stubborn nature is lost in

His abounding love,

Replaced by gentle meekness after beholding
His loving face.

A yielded life, a humble heart, pliable
in the Master's hand,

All that remains is the brilliance of His divine
nature now reflected.

For all things that do not please have
been sweetly offered up.

Others see the transformation right before their eyes;

Gentle meekness born from such violent means.

You are forever transformed by His love.

The spring leaves are returning;

The barren winter is over and the
singing of the birds has come.

A HUMBLE SPIRIT

Lord, give me a humble spirit—one that reflects Your nature. I desire a soft and compassionate heart, tender in love, rich in mercy and abounding in grace. Father, we do not want to carry a critical spirit, looking for the perceived flaws in others, but rather let us remember that we ourselves are weak, desperate for a strong Savior. I desire that You restore in me a holy amazement for You, where my heart is dependent and yielded to You in every situation. May I tremble at your holy Word and FULLY

acknowledge my human weakness so that You can show yourself strong in my life. Teach me to prefer my brother or sister above myself—that the beautiful face of Christ may shine forth through my life.

SPIRIT AND LIFE

Jesus, in Your presence I receive "spirit and life," and I am changed. I desire to impart spirit and life everywhere I go. I want to hear pearls of His presence from the throne room to impart to those who are hungry for more. As I behold You and rest in your presence, I'm able to hear Your heart and speak what I hear under the anointing. Give me Your heart, Oh Abba, for I would cherish just one sentence from the depths of your heart more than all the "things" of this world. I treasure You above all else. You ravish my heart with only a word. . .

I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me.

That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures. (Proverbs 18:17, 21)

THE SOUND OF HIS NAME

Do you love Jesus? Have you made Him "your" Jesus? Say His name—JESUS. Say it again—JESUS. When you

whisper His name does your heart overflow with love and adoration? Do tears fill your eyes when you say His name? To think that *my* Jesus loves me so much that He would want to come and visit me—how profound! We can sense His powerful presence at just the sound of His name.

"Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee" Song of Solomon 1:3 (KJV).

"The syllables of your name murmur like a meadow brook. No wonder everyone loves to say your name!" (MSG)

"Your name is perfume poured out. Therefore the young women love you." (NIV)

"Your name is like its spreading fragrance. No wonder all the young women love you!" (NLT)

"Thy name is (like) oil shed out; therefore young damsels loved thee. (And thy aroma is equal to the best perfumes.) Thy name is like oil poured out; and so the young women, or the maidens, loved thee." (WYC)

I believe the Lord has a special word for us today: At the sound of His very name there is the release of an "ointment". As you speak the individual syllables of His name, it permeates the air like the scent of a rare and precious perfume. His name is like oil poured out, as His aroma is equal to the most expensive of perfumes. Therefore do the virgins love Him, no wonder everyone

loves to say His name.

Say it again--say His name--- JESUS!

RAVISHED HEART

"You have ravished my heart, my treasure, my bride. I am overcome by one glance of your eyes, by a single bead of your necklace" (Song of Solomon 4:9).

"You have ravished my heart, my treasure, my bride," our Lord proclaims softly, **"with only one glance of your eyes."** His eyes burn like fire and are so full of love that our hearts are moved and from deep within where we cry out: **"I am my beloved's—the one He desires"** (Song of Solomon 7:10). As for me, I will never keep You waiting. I will never take You for granted, but rather I will love You with ALL my heart, I will worship at Your beautiful feet for all of eternity. I will seek Your face not just Your hands, for it is Your heart I am after.

I WILL NOT KEEP YOU STANDING

Lord, I will not keep You standing there. I bid you come and sit with me in sweet intimacy. Reveal yourself to me, for I am not content with just hearing stories of Your presence. I want to discover You myself! Lord, I want to keep You company as I sit with You and just love on You.

I embrace You, I love You, and I want to have a holy feast unto You. I want to be a constant companion of my God! Lord, I refuse to keep You waiting when You call. When You announce your presence I will open the door to my heart. Come in, dearest Lord, and commune with me.

At His feet of mercy shines the beauty of His divine love. His face penetrates the darkest of hearts and brings forth beauty from the ashes of our lives.

RESURRECTION

The Lord spoke this to me: "When I RESURRECT or RESTORE something I make it BETTER than it was before—stronger, more powerful, more anointed, and far more effective!" Did you hear that? More powerful, more anointed, stronger, and more effective than ever before! He can inject new life into dead places and make them better than ever!

HIS GLORIOUS PRESENCE

David knew that his joy could only be restored through His glorious presence (Ps. 51:12), so he cried out from deep within: **"Cast me not away from thy presence."** He couldn't even imagine the emptiness of a life without the Holy Spirit. In the end, when David strayed he quickly ran back into the presence and repented, once again wrapping himself in the comfort of the Lord's waiting arms.

And as his reward, God wrapped him in His glory, and put a new song in his heart, restoring the joy of his salvation and giving him peace. After all, he was a man after God's own heart!

The finest moments in all of time are the moments invested in His presence...

FEASTING ON HIS PRESENCE

Feasting at the Lord's table at night is more rewarding than I can explain in mere words. The truth is that some things are better caught than taught. When you grasp the treasure of feasting on His presence and sitting at His table you will never be the same again.

I am amazed that I would even be allowed to keep the Lord company at night—that I could ever touch His heart. Yet His heart is moved when I attend the King's College and sit at His feet to hear His heart, to love on Him, to just be silent relishing the moment of such Holy Communion.

FATHER AND FRIEND

God has many children but few friends. Will you dare to get close enough to the Lord to touch His heart? The Lord longs for someone to keep Him company and speak to Him as a loving "Father". So many only have Him as their God, but not a close and intimate friend. Will you be His friend tonight? He is waiting for your loving response. . .

I'M DESPERATE FOR WHAT IS REAL...

I can hear the cries coming from deep within a desperate soul, cries for more of God, for more than just a fleeting touch. Within the church today are those who have be-

come desperate for a release of the manifest glory of God. They want evidence that it's real, it's powerful, and that it works to address the problems around them. They need proof of healings, miracles, signs, wonders and deliverances. They want all that God has to offer today, but are unwilling to settle for more hype or cheap imitations to get it.

As we study the first-century church we see that miracles, signs, and wonders flowed regularly, but they flowed as the church prayed, preached repentance, and cherished holiness. A baptism of fire cleansed the early disciples while consuming the sin, which resulted in a deep and holy fear of the Lord. People walked softly before their God as they embraced a reverence born out of holy encounters with the Holy Spirit.

I am desperate for real, supernatural glory to hit the church in waves that will leave no doubt as to their authenticity. I yearn for healings, miracles, and earthshaking revival that will bring mass conversions as well as cleansing flames that will consume sin and produce a stunning fear of the Lord. I want to see the power of God shatter inflated egos, expose insensitivity and kill pride. I want to flow in the true river of God, and I believe we can as we embrace a holy God and honor the precious Holy Spirit.

I can hear the cries of an entire generation desperate for what's real. Will we give it to them? Are we willing to walk humbly and respectfully before our God? Will we pay the price to get there? I pray that we will and that such a move will start with me, because it's now or never.

A desperate situation requires immediate, desperate prayer. Half-hearted prayers will not suffice.

"...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16).

BE RADIANT WITH THE GLORY OF GOD

Consider this: when Moses returned from spending time with the LORD he returned with a radiant glow so dazzling that the people demanded he cover it with a veil. The surpassing glory could not be dimmed or controlled. (See Exodus 34:35.) Moses heard God speak and saw God (His back parts), and went away with a glow of glory unlike anything the people had seen before.

Before Stephen was stoned the people couldn't take their eyes off him, because his face became as bright as an angel's face. And because the glory of God could not be contained, the inner glow of the Spirit manifested on His face.

As we spend time resting in His presence, the beautiful glory of Christ will visibly shine through us. We will not have to work to make it happen; it will be a natural result of the time we spend loving on Jesus and listening as He speaks. The warm glow of the Spirit will become as a "light" and others will know that we have been with our Jesus. This visible sign will inspire others to run hard after God (see Matt. 5:16) until they too are desperate to experience the reality of the glory of God in their own lives and refuse to take no for an answer. We may never have to wear a veil, but others will recognize that we have been with the Lord.

The people in Moses' day were terrified by even the idea of that kind of close relationship with the Lord, because

the thundering and flashes of lightning that came from the mountain of God caused them to shrink back in fear. (See Exodus 20:18.) Yet Moses dared to seek the face of God, and in the process he was consumed by the very glory of God.

We now live in day where we do not have to fear coming before the Lord. (See Hebrews 4:16.) We are invited to come with bold confidence to the throne of grace, because Jesus paved the way with His very lifeblood. As we come and rest in His presence, we are saturated with His love so that we actually shine with the beauty of the Lord. His glory changes even the countenance of those who allow Him to move and shine through them.

Others will recognize that, because of His presence, you've become clean and holy—you've been changed, reflecting the beauty of His holiness.

Isaiah 60:1 says it best:

Shine (be radiant with the glory of the Lord), for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you!

And what could be better than that?

TRUSTING ABBA

Trials are permitted to come our way for an important reason—to teach us the priceless lessons of trusting and dependency on our Abba God. In Romans 5:4, the Greek word "dokime", which is translated here as experience, implies trustfulness.

We live in a world that is cold, complicated, and confusing. It's all too easy to rely on our own abilities to solve our problems. We will never come to a place of rest through our own power; we can get there only by relying on God, who will enable us to experience His divine faithfulness. Faithfulness, in turn, increases our faith, causing us to depend only on Him to guide us through our circumstances. This trust will bring us to a place of continual rest, the rest that only He can provide. People may disappoint and betray us; it is only when we trust in Him that we can relax into a peacefulness that passes understanding.

TO KNOW HIM

To KNOW Him is To ADORE Him. The more we take the time to know Christ the more we learn to love Him. The tears freely fall; our hearts are fully convinced that the ONE our soul yearns for is standing right beside us, calling us His own.

ABIDE IN HIM

Spend time in the manifest presence of God and let Him minister to your most pressing needs. Get to know Him on a deeply intimate level, knowing that He knows your very name! In reality, we don't need the praise or recognition of men nearly as much as we need the presence and power of a loving God who will exalt us in due season. Your inheritance will come if you serve the Lord with a

humble heart. So let me challenge you to become a friend of God by abiding in Him!

MEEKNESS OF HEART

Acknowledge your desperate need for God and be filled with godly meekness. Humble yourself before the Lord, and He will lift you high. People who are gentle, humble and kind often have a great ending no matter how insignificant they seem or where they started from.

Meekness is a fruit of the Spirit that has been lost in our aggressive, self-centered culture. Because people associate it with weakness, most do not admire others for being "meek". And though it may appear to some as weakness, the spiritual reality is that it is great strength, an attribute of Almighty God and a fruit of His Spirit that we desperately need. Meekness means that, while you have the ability to get even with your enemies, you have your spirit under control, and instead you choose to love, to walk humbly and reverently before God, laying your case before Him. Meekness is really the power of self-control. Meekness is hanging on the cross when you could have summoned Legions of Angels to destroy us all. True meekness is CHRIST THE SON! The meek are among those so favored that they will share in Jesus' inheritance on the earth.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5).

Father we desire this—let us honor you and walk in tender love and meekness.

DIVINE CONTENTMENT

The Bible tells us "to be content in all things," so why is this so hard? Many today allow anxiety to rule their hearts and lives, consumed by worry and "what if's". In fact, they are so caught up in tomorrow that they cannot enjoy today.

Many times we envision plans for our lives that are unrealistic, believing we will always be surrounded by green grass and gentle streams. At times we must learn to be content even when we walk through unpleasant valleys.

What if it doesn't get better right away? Will we be like Paul and choose to be content in all things? Jesus chose to bear His cross when it went against everything His flesh desired. In the same way, we can't go by our feelings or we will be ruled by them. We should desire to die to our carnal flesh so we can be ruled by the Spirit of God. Perhaps the trial we face serves some higher purpose; and if that's so, we must choose to be thankful and believe that all is well with our souls, because God is still on the throne. His ways are higher than ours.

Sometimes we have to learn to be content so God will open a better door for us. Our attitude has a lot to do with our advancement. Do we choose the wrong attitude and allow ourselves to be ruled by the flesh? Our cry today should be, "Crucify my flesh, Lord, and let me have joy today anyway!" I choose to be content in all things knowing You

have my entire life in Your powerful hands. I trust in the integrity of God, and therefore I am CONTENT.

BEAUTIFULLY BROKEN

Right now God is saying to the body of Christ, "I, the Lord, will empower YOU with a special anointing and use you in the area of your deepest wounds, to bring healing and restoration to others!" In my own life I have seen the Lord bring a special anointing in the area of rejection, restoration, and healing because the Lord first allowed me to face that same kind of crushing pain, whether it came as a result of my own poor choices or by the hand of others. It was in this furnace of affliction, not in green grass by peaceful rivers, that I was prepared for what I'm doing now. In fact, we will truly have a tender heart of compassion for those who walk in our shoes, once we allow the Healer of Broken Lives to minister the love of Christ through those wounded, yet now-healed, places inside us.

Interestingly enough, what I assumed was a curse of the devil God has actually turned around for good. (Genesis 50:20) Those painful times were actually a training camp where I learned obedience through the things I suffered. Meekness doesn't come through impartation or by the laying on of hands, but through a vessel that has been beautifully broken, as we learn to depend and lean on Him alone. When He is all we have left, He becomes our all in all, our very breath, our life. In that place our hearts overflow with incredible love as the result of a personal

revelation of Jesus where even the mention of His name stirs our very souls and makes us cry. That's passion that cannot be quenched, no matter what happens next. From that place we know we will never be the same again, because we have walked through the fire and come out ablaze with passion for Christ and compassion for souls. We also carry a message that will silence even the harshest critics, because we also carry the fragrance of our Beloved, and His glory transforms the atmosphere wherever we go, touching lives in ways nothing else can. If this describes you, take heart, because it's from that place where God can use you best.

FIRE OF GOD

Let God light you on fire for Him. Be extremely fervent and red hot with your love for God! Your passionate devotion and relentless pursuit will spread the fire. With the power of the Holy Spirit, spread the good news of Jesus Christ. And watch a sudden harvest of souls burst into the Kingdom of God! God wants to use you to light up the world with His power. Hiding your devotion and Holy Spirit fire only diminish your effectiveness. Catch the fire and let others come to see you burn!

Lord, I just want to burn for you! So set me on fire!

May I tremble at Your holy Word and fully acknowledge my human weakness so that I can show Yourself strong in my life.

TIME IS SHORT

With each year, I can't help but reflect on how quickly time has passed. The older you get the faster the years seem to fly by. How are we "spending" or "investing" our lives? We only have one life to invest or spend.

The other day, I was contemplating how quickly we are moving toward the designated date when we stand before our Heavenly Father. To some this seems like a day so far in the distant future that it appears as if it will never happen. Yet life has a way of marching on, moving us ever closer to that special date with Father God. We will ALL stand in the very Holy throne room of God and gaze upon the beauty of the Lord to give account of how we used our time. What will He say to me on that day? This is a recurring reflection of mine.

At this point I hope you'll bear with me as I share what's heavy on my heart.

Jesus is NOT just a painting on a wall or dramatic story in a book. He is NOT a mystical character like Santa Claus, Father Time, Zeus or Superman. He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords! He can also be known! In fact, He is more real than you or I, and He wants you to know Him more intimately this coming year.

His unforgettable eyes are full of tender love for you. You may feel unclean when you try to imagine this. You may even feel your life falls so very short, but. . .

I can see the scarred hand of our Precious Lord tenderly reaching out to you. I see the tears of compassion as He weeps for you. His teardrops fall gently upon your head as you lower your head, afraid to even meet His gaze. The foul smell of your past may linger upon you when He lifts your chin, but with eyes full of love He looks deep into your soul and says these amazing words: "You are my child! Follow me with ALL your heart. I will give you a new beginning, for I am your Father!"

Time is short; your days on this Earth are numbered. Don't squander the precious moments you have left. Life's curtain will close suddenly before you know it, but today I see the Lord Jesus reaching out to you and gently calling your name, wooing you closer to Him this year.

I want you to know this remarkable Jesus! He has kindly forgiven me of every sin and gently heals EVERY wound. I love Him so much! He calls me His child and is making all things brand new. As difficult as it is to believe, He desires to be our closest friend and light our hearts on fire with the very presence of God. Can you feel His love for you right now? Does your heart burn from within at the very sound of His voice? Do you sense His nearness? He is standing right beside you even now. . .

Time is very, very short. We will all stand before our living God. Choose to kneel before Him as a close friend. Let the tears freely flow from a heart branded by His love. It's not too late to begin again. It's NOT too late to pursue God, and it is not too late to be that friend of God. Start this year with a fresh, clean slate and be ready. Behold, He makes

ALL things new!

"Lord, consume my friends with the very HOLY presence of God. Let your burning eyes light them on fire for you!"

STREAMS IN THE DESERT

When my soul is parched and dry—

When out of touch, He seems so far away, and I groan, I plead for Him to pour afresh, His satisfying waters from on High. Listening for His voice, I come apart

And wait for Him "as deep calls unto deep."

And there my thirsting soul is filled

With rivers flowing from His very heart. Begotten of the Father, Christ appears

In barren wilderness with healing oils

With mercy streaming from His Father's heart, and crimson cloths to wipe away my tears.

Fellow pilgrim, in that desert place,

The Master sets a table there for you,

And bids you come and dine—your soul refresh.

Come feast on riches of His sovereign grace.

And though you feel you have no advocate,

You're traveling on this road in solitude,

Unseen He walks beside, His presence sure, for nothing from His love shall separate.

REACHING

Don't focus, precious friend, on the troubled waters around you; refuse to be consumed by fear and worry! Rather live your life according to what is written in the Word of God, and keep your eyes on Jesus. Put your complete trust in Him alone. As you do this, you will stand on top of those troubled waters. Right out there in the middle of all the confusion is the Rock of Ages! He is our firm foundation. Look to Him, He is reaching out His hand to you.

OPEN THE DOOR

I can hear the cries coming from deep within a desperate soul, cries for more of God, for more than just a fleeting touch—more than just a blessing, more than just the moving of His mighty hand. He is looking for those who will cease from the abundance of activity and COME to lay their heads on His chest, bask in His overwhelming LOVE and dwell with HIM in the secret place. I can hear the sound—the sound of the Lord coming—I can see His

robe as He passes by and announces His presence. Behold, His train has filled the temple. Behold! Draw near to the Lord while He may be found. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you! Can you hear the Lord knocking? Open the door! Hear the Word of the Lord.

AT HIS FEET

The Lord has taken me on quite a journey over the years, and I have missed the mark many times. I have NOT arrived in any sense of the word, but I am learning to be more content lying at His beautiful feet in my prayer room than standing at a pulpit. He is our dearest and closest friend, His presence is more real than you or I. I must be with Him. I must. I miss Him when I'm not with Him. Lord, may we never keep you waiting. . .

You will rest in God when you stop sweating—stop trying to make it happen on your own and wait patiently for Him. Be still and KNOW that HE is GOD.

I DECLARE OVER YOU

"You shall be exceeding fruitful, in the mighty name of Jesus Christ.

The blessing of God will be on your head and speak into your life.

You will be fruitful and multiply, you will increase and walk in dominion, in Jesus' name.

There will be miraculous transformations in every aspect of your life.

Your path will shine more and more in Jesus' name.

Miracles, signs and wonders will be a daily part of your life.

Lord, may your name be praised forever and ever! Wrap your arms around my friend in Jesus' name!"

Those that take the time to sit with me will hear my very heart . . .

MOVE FORWARD

Even though you may want to move forward in your life, you may still have one foot on the brakes. The remarkable truth is that, in order to be free to move forward, we must learn how to let go. Release the hurt. Release the fear. Refuse to nurture your old pain. The energy it takes to hang on to the past is holding you back from a new life. What is it you're holding on to?

You can't change the things that have happened in your life, but you can decide how you interpret and respond to them. Give all the experiences of your life over to God and then have faith that He will carry you in the palm of His hands.

You will begin to heal from the past when you forgive your past and let go of your pain as well as forgive yourself for any part you may have played in it. Please don't drag your past into a brand new year. Let go and cling to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of your faith! Start today.

HIDE BEHIND THE CROSS

I was eighteen years old when I headed to India on a preaching trip for the summer. Until that trip, I had never preached before, but being a pastor's son there was an assumption that I, too, could communicate with people like my father.

The great day of our first of many meetings had finally arrived. We had flown

thousands of miles—practically around the world—for this opportunity. It was a

beautiful day and the sun was out. Many Indian people came to hear us speak. Anticipation was in the air.

When it was my turn to speak, I had no idea what I should say.

"How long should this be?" I asked, looking at my team leader.

"Oh, about thirty minutes," he said, patting me on the back as I approached the microphone.

"Thirty minutes!" I gasped, trembling. "Maybe ten minutes."

Wiping my forehead, I gazed at those Indian people all looking and waiting for my message. I froze. My throat was so dry that I had difficulty speaking. My tongue seemed tied. I felt I had nothing to give them. All I could say was, "I will remember you and tell the Americans back home to keep you in prayer." I couldn't think of anything more to say, so I quickly sat down. I knew my team was disappointed in me.

The others on my team seemed to have no problem speaking, but I just couldn't talk. Meeting after meeting went by with the same result every time. When it was

my turnto speak, everyone knew what would happen. I would trip over my tongue with each word, saying very little, and then sit down.

I felt totally ineffective and bound up. At one meeting, I managed to rattle off a story I had once read, but still I was not anointed nor was I able to communicate well. I knew people on my team were amazed that a pastor's son could not speak.

I felt like a failure and began to question God, *Why would You send me here to let me fall flat on my face?* That summer of 1989 was a disaster! I absolutely swore off any preaching for the rest of my life, after all I could NOT speak. . .

Sometime later I prayed this prayer:

Dear Lord, *please use my past for Your glory. I give it to You.* By giving it all to the Lord, I also gave Him all my plans for the future. Suddenly, I knew what I needed to do. I needed to go to Bible school to seek God and pray for His will to be done in my life.

God led me to Pinecrest Bible Training Center, located in the beautiful Adirondack Mountains of New York. There I began the maturing process. Wade Taylor took a special interest in my life and became my spiritual father for the next twenty-three years. God began to instill in me His character and qualities. And I became His man, not my own. He gave me a love for people I had never before experienced. Before long, I heard God calling me. I had to surrender and stop running. I realized then I was going to

do what I vowed I would never do—be a preacher.

On a mission trip with my Bible school, I headed to the island of Jamaica. My team was a preaching team just like I was part of in India. We all shared in-tent meetings, churches, and open-air meetings. Our team was separated into groups, and we were sent out all over the country.

Night was slowly creeping up on us as we walked along the dirt road leading to the church on the mountain. My heart beat against my chest like a hammer pounding nails. What would this night hold? I was nervous because I knew I was the main speaker for the evening. Sergey, a Russian brother from Bible school, and I were teamed together, and we had spent a lot of time praying for that night's meeting. We were warmly greeted as we entered the church and took our places.

"Pray for me, Sergey," I whispered in his ear.

"God will bless you, Brother," he responded with a wink.

The singing ended and Sergey got up to speak. After a short while, he sat down and I knew I was up soon. *Oh, God, please anoint me, I can't do this without You!*

"It is so good to have Evangelist Steve here tonight," the pastor shouted, startling me from my prayer. "He is a mighty man of God! Everyone praise the Lord as he comes to preach to us tonight!"

Oh, God, I thank You for Your anointing, I prayed as I approached the pulpit.

Thoughts of India flashed through my mind, but as soon as I stood before the people something different happened. When I opened my mouth to preach, I felt the fire of God within me as I said the name JESUS! It stirred in me like a raging river. Every word I spoke seemed penetrating and full of meaning. My tongue was literally set free that night, and, as I walked the platform, I was preaching under the power of God. I couldn't believe my own ears. I was actually preaching!

When I gave the altar call for salvation, twenty to twenty-five people responded. I just stood there in utter amazement as people filled the front. During those two weeks in Jamaica, I led nearly 100 people to Christ. That first night, God spoke to me something so profound that it has changed my life.

"Do you remember India, Steve?" He said.

"Yes, Lord," I answered.

"That was your strength. Now do you see Jamaica?"

"Oh yes, Lord," I replied, my excitement rising.

"That is My strength in you. Remember where your dependency comes from!"

And then I understood. God had allowed me to fall on my face in India to show me where my source was. I needed to learn that my dependency should always be on God, and today there is not a service that goes by when I don't ask God for His anointing to minister. I find a back room, fall

to my knees and ask Him to hide me behind the cross as I lean on Him. I realize that if anything is going to happen in a meeting, it must completely be the Holy Spirit's doing, not something I could ever work up.

I am nothing special or extraordinary, for I am just a broken vessel that depends on Him.

Jesus must *always* receive the glory. If we think the reason for God's power in ministry is because of our strength or ability, our pride starts to get in the way of His work, and we become useless vessels. God went out of His way to teach me such a valuable lesson, using what seemed at the time like a horrible trial. Yet that lesson is priceless and close to my heart. I have never forgotten this principle, and it has become the foundation of our ministry. I hope my story will encourage you to hide behind the cross and remember where you dependency comes from.

BLOOM WHERE YOU ARE PLANTED

God gave me a word for those who feel called to the five-fold ministry. Many of you have become frustrated because you have not been able to move into the fullness of your calling. You have asked, "Lord, when will I be able to do what I'm really called to do? The wait has been long, and it's hard not to grow weary in the wait." I sense the Lord would say to you: "Remember it is I who called you in your Mother's womb. Will I not surely bring you forth as I promised? Before you were even born I already wrote

your destiny as I have anointed plans already in motion for your life!" I sense the Lord say, "Bloom where you are planted because in the wait I am preparing you for the days ahead." Did you hear that? BLOOM! Do not say, "But, Lord, I am stuck in a dead end job where I can't even see my calling." The Lord would remind you, "It is not what you are currently doing—it is who you are!" You may be cleaning toilets but you are a Pastor. You may be selling insurance but you are an apostle. You may be working at a fast food restaurant but you are a worship leader! The Lord says, "You are not defined by your current job description. REMEMBER who you are! Bloom where you are planted! Enjoy the journey as I have My hand on your life."

A humble heart begins when self-sufficiency ends.

HO EVERY ONE THAT IS THIRSTY

The word "wither" means *to die slowly*. There are many living dead who may have blood pumping through their veins but their spirits are withering. You are made up of both a flesh man and a spirit man, and the one you feed the most is going to live and thrive. The one you don't feed is going to wither. Many people have withered spirits because they haven't read the Word or prayed or sought after God. They're miserable and empty inside, because God has not been given His rightful place in their hearts. But it doesn't have to be that way. Today God says:

"I will: cause the rain of my Spirit to refresh you, to sustain you and to make you come alive in me. Come to the fountain, there's fullness in Jesus. Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters and drink" (Is. 55:1).

The following is a beautiful old hymn by Lucy J. Meyer

Ho! every one that is thirsty in spirit,

Ho! every one that is weary and sad;

Come to the fountain, there's fullness in Jesus,

All that you're longing for: come and be glad!

Refrain

I will pour water on him that is thirsty,

I will pour floods upon the dry ground;

Open your hearts for the gifts I am bringing;

While ye are seeking Me, I will be found.

Child of the world, are you tired of your bondage?

Weary of earth joys, so false, so untrue?

Thirsting for God and His fullness of blessing?

List to the promise, a message for you!

Refrain

Child of the Kingdom, be filled with the Spirit!

Nothing but fullness thy longing can meet;

'Tis the enduement for life and for service;

Thine is the promise, so certain, so sweet.

Refrain

Ho, Every One That Is Thirsty

by Lucy Jane Rider Meyer

1849-1922

INNER WEALTH

The Lord is so good to keep us leaning upon Him and seeking His heart alone. The greatest wealth is not prosperity in this life, but rather the "inner wealth of the Spirit of God" dwelling within our hearts, knowing Him as a close friend, and forever leaning upon His breast.

When a humble vessel begins to sing and preach from the depths of their soul they touches the heart of God—releasing a power and presence.

SIT WITH HIM AWHILE

Come close to the Lord and sit with Him awhile for you are sweet and beautiful to His heart. His voice is soothing; His countenance is lovely; beautiful are His words to you. They refresh your soul and call you deeper into His presence. Oh, the depths of His love for you!

He delights to draw close to His bride. He is with you through it all. His eyes are always on all their troubles, but His beloved shall flourish once more—brighter, sweeter, lovelier, more beautiful, more glorious, purer, increasingly radiant, and fairer! They shall carry the glorious presence of their Lord—and shall flourish forever in the courts of our God!

May that hot coal of fire from the altar be ablaze in my soul! That my heart would burn from within at the very sound of your voice.

TAKE MY HAND

I sense the Lord saying today:

"As you let go of the things that hinder you, the chains of the past will fall away. Fear, anger, resentment and bitterness toward others will disappear as you are healed. I will redeem all of that if you let Me. Please, my child, don't start your day gazing in the rear view mirror with blame on your mind. Instead, give Me permission to address the root causes, so you can start afresh. Let me heal your mind, soul, and emotions so you can worship Me in spirit and in truth, withholding nothing. Trust again. Try Again. Take hold of My hand. I love you and will never leave you the way you are if you let Me transform you."

RESCUE, RESTORE, REVIVE

Second Corinthians 1:3-4 reads:

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God."

So often adults walk around still bearing the scars of youth. If those scars are left untreated they can create an even heavier burden. It doesn't have to be that way!

Over the years I've learned something. When the world walks out and you hang your head low, Jesus walks in—if you ask Him. Having walked Himself the path of humiliation, rejection and shame before us, He can relate to us. The heart of the Master is touched by our grief. He's been there, done that! And He not only empathizes with us, He rubs a balm over the wounded places, dispelling the gloom. And the smile we wear from then on is genuine.

May the comfort of the Holy Spirit fill you now, may He turn it all around for your good. May His divine presence wrap around you like a warm blanket bringing healing every place you hurt. May you also be able to comfort those who are in pain, with that same comfort you have received. Wrap your love around someone who needs it today and watch God rescue, restore and revive!

THE EYES OF JESUS

I recently noticed something. You meet some people, and you leave feeling valued, respected and loved. It is not that way with everyone in life. These people are treasures; even when they correct you, they do it in love and take you to the next level. They have a gift to value and touch everyone they meet. Lord, help us to be such a person, that everyone we meet would say, "In this person I see the eyes of my Jesus. My life is now better just by meeting with them today." Oh God, let it be!

HIS GREATEST YEARNING

I hear the Lord passing by. He desires to be wanted and appreciated. Will you reach out and touch Him? Will you respond to His call? I hear His footsteps approaching. Reach out with ALL your heart and pursue Him while there's still time, for this is your day of visitation.

HOT COAL OF FIRE

Sermons alone will never do, dear Lord. I also want an open heaven wherever I go. Let me know you with my heart, not just my head. Oh God, download into me revelation not just intellectual information. Give me the Word of the Lord, and may that hot coal of fire from your altar be set ablaze in my soul!

The truth is that a holy feast is available to all who will sacrifice their comfort and get up in the night to meet with their God!

CONTENTMENT

God will exalt us in "due season". Your inheritance will come if you serve the Lord with a humble heart. So let me challenge you to become a friend of God by abiding in Him! Be content to abide in Him alone—allow God to be your "all in all", the very reason you breathe and have your being. Let your heart reach out toward Him when you wake up in the morning and when you lie down to sleep. When Jesus is truly first place and has so captivated you—so that He is ALL you desire—you know then you truly are seeking first the Kingdom of God and ALL these "other things" will be added unto you. BUT know this: when you get these "other things", they will pale in comparison to your friendship with the Lover of your soul! The best treasure is found in the Lord. Treasure Him above all other things, and you will become "rich" in spirit and find true fulfilment.

Cultivating a personal relationship with the Lord takes time and diligence-spending much time in His precious presence.

INADEQUACIES

So often we focus on our weaknesses and see ourselves as unqualified or inept. As hard as it is to believe, God sees us as "more than conquerors". Today many people have poor self-images and confess: "God, I can't do this or that; you've got to find somebody more qualified or more holy than me." You really believe that you don't have what it takes.

Your self-image is much like a picture of yourself; it is who and what you picture yourself to be, which may or may not be an accurate reflection of who you really are. But what you feel about yourself will have a tremendous impact on your future.

We often speak, act, and react as the person we think we are. The stark truth is we can never rise above the image we have of ourselves in our minds. It's time to reprogram our thoughts! It is time to wash our minds with the Word and embrace the mind of Christ.

It's interesting to note the difference between the way Gideon saw himself and the way God addressed him. Although Gideon felt unqualified, full of fear, and lacking in confidence, God addressed him as a "mighty man of valor." Gideon felt weak while God saw him as strong and competent to lead people to battle and victory.

God wants us to have a healthy, positive self-image, to see ourselves as mighty sons and daughters of honor, valor, and virtue. You may disagree, but remember that

you are "in process". God is patient with you, who are His workmanship. Don't fret. God is not finished with you yet.

His love for you is based on who you are in Him, not on your flaws, your questionable past or your insecurities. He created you unique, as an individual. There has never been, nor will there ever be, another person identical to you, and He sees you as His special masterpiece! There are no doppelgangers in the spirit!

You may feel unqualified, weak, and fearful, but God sees you as a victorious overcomer! He created us in His image and is continually shaping and conforming us to His character. His anointing causes us to become mighty, honorable and more than a conqueror as we yield to Him and submit to His lordship.

REFLECTING MY BEAUTY

I sense the Lord saying today:

"Focus on My love for you, as you gaze lovingly upon Me, and let Me quiet your fearful soul. In the process you will be transformed to closely resemble Me. The glory of My face changes even the countenance of those who allow Me to move and shine through them. Others will recognize that, because of My presence, you've become clean and holy—you've been changed, reflecting My beauty."

"When this occurs you will become radiant with humble gentleness, glowing purity, and kind-hearted compassion,

offering patience and love for injustice, forgiving even your worst enemies. And just as I gave you an example of tender love and compassion when I went to the cross, you will follow My example as you behold Me."

"Don't just glance upon Me now and then, and don't be in a hurry just to catch a brief glimpse of Me, but fix your eyes on Me continuously. Bask in My presence and let Me change and fill you today."

Spiritual maturity must be more than just a desire or an intention—it must be walked out daily...

LEGACY

We all make mistakes, but rather than condemning ourselves forever when we blow it, we must ask forgiveness and get back up again to keep pressing on. Will we have tenacious faith? Will we give ourselves to prayer and fasting? Will we pay the price to be that "Friend of God" who will so encourage future generations? Life passes quickly, and before we know it we'll go on into eternity. At that moment, people will pause to ponder the meaning of our lives. With that coming evaluation in mind, we must create a worthwhile legacy now for generations that follow. It humbles me and brings me to tears to realize my short, simple life could encourage a future traveler. It creates a tremendous sense of responsibility. My friend, if you have stumbled on the path of life, learn from it, humble yourself and write a brand new story with your future.

As sometimes a youth enters a dense wood,
And carefully leaves stone markings along his path,
Lest he get lost,
So also I desire to mark the trail of my life
With clear signposts to the Father's House.
That no one following in my footsteps
Will ever stumble or be made weak,
Or worse, lose their way.
Lord, let my life be a beacon light,
For travelers coming after me.

Lord, please use our lives for Your glory. Let us be a shining example of one who paid the price to be Your friend. Let our lives count for something! Let us encourage the faith of others through our obedience.

LET THERE BE

"And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Genesis 1:3).

I want to focus on a simple, three-word phrase: "Let there be." We serve a mighty, all-powerful God. As He speaks the words, "Let there be," into your circumstances it will be so. His words have unlimited creative power! Take the Apostle Peter for example, when the Lord spoke the word, "Come," Peter actually believed he could do what Jesus said, and as a result he walked on water! The water was actually transformed into a sidewalk by God's creative power. When I began to contemplate Genesis 1:3, I came to the conclusion that even our worst conceivable dilemmas are no challenge for Him at all. In fact, God never wrings His hands or wonders what to do next. His point of view is much higher than ours; all He has to do is utter those three simple words, and it will be so. If God can create the heavens and the earth in six short days, and turn water into a sidewalk, He can certainly rescue you from seemingly impossible circumstances.

Many Christians have come to believe that their troubles are bigger than God, because the devil has deceived them into believing God is a million miles away and powerless

to help them, or that He doesn't care enough to move on their behalf. Don't fall for the devil's lies! In these last days he's running to and fro like a roaring lion, attempting to steal our hope and faith in our amazingly powerful God.

Our world is cold, complicated, and confusing. It's all too easy to rely on our own abilities to solve our problems. But in our own power, we will never come to a place of rest. We can get there only by relying on God, who reveals His faithfulness, which, in turn, increases our faith so that we're convinced beyond a shadow of a doubt that He will come through as we believe and speak His promises into our lives. This ever-increasing revelation ultimately brings us to a place of continual rest, found nowhere else. People and material things let us down; it's only when we trust in Him that we can choose to rest, knowing He has the situation well in hand and will work all things out for our good.

"Never let the devil get you down when God is working in and for you." —John W. Follette

Perhaps you're facing trouble in some area of your life. Maybe it involves your family, finances, work, or health. Perhaps you're struggling to get control over an addiction. If that describes you, I want to encourage you to search the Word for promises you can meditate on day and night, so that they become part of your belief system.

If you're in that place, it's important not to give up or lose hope or stay stuck in discouragement. He has heard and is moving on your behalf, but an important part of

this process is being stretched to believe when the going gets tough. Wait patiently before Him, and begin to speak His promises over your challenges, and stand in faith, no matter how things look to your physical eyes. When you choose to believe when circumstances don't agree, God is pleased and will turn around for good what the enemy has meant for your harm. Instead of getting into fear, start praising Him ahead of time, for faith always gets into praise before it can see a single sign of the answer. No matter what the issue, God is as big as you believe He is, and will move in signs and wonders if you choose to only believe. In fact, what we believe, whether good or bad, limits God in ways nothing else can, so let's stretch those boundaries and set God free by our faith to do what looks impossible! The incredible truth is that God's hand is already upon you. He is speaking forth the Word over you right now, so get on board and believe what God has said about you. Only believe!

A life of sacrifice and devotion is a virtue, a sweet fragrance that actually scents the throne room and blesses the heart of God.

MY COMPANY OF OVERCOMERS

In prayer, I recently saw a vast army of men and women, standing regal and confident, awaiting their marching orders. Yet they appeared more like kings, queens and priests than I anticipated. Their nobility was a badge of honor. Their faces shined brightly, reflecting the very glory of God, filled with yearning as their hearts burned with a passion for more of Him. Their countenance literally caused me to shudder and shake, because they carried the stunning authority of heaven. Every word they spoke was anointed and carried a holy presence that could not be denied.

This army stood on a battlefield, but without a single iota of fear in their demeanor. Among them were men, women and children—people from every nation and tongue—standing shoulder to shoulder, connected by brotherly love, dignity, and honor.

The Lord spoke to me and said, "These were the ones who once lay wounded, victims of warfare, but I lifted them up, restored them and empowered them to be My overcomers. They are a part of my end time army who shall advance My Kingdom purposes on Earth."

All at once, Satan came at them in a last ditch effort to drive these dear ones into the valley of defeat, but the Lord would not allow it. He quickly came to rescue them as they stood strong in faith, and in the power of His might.

I sense the Lord saying, "Satan has tried to destroy them,

trying to convince them that they are not delivered, restored and healed. He's assaulted them with negative missiles to tear them down in defeat."

Then I saw pictures of face after face of those who sought to injure and destroy this vast and beloved army. Satan thought he was sneaky and whispered lies into their ears, saying, "Remember that one who wounded you and left you to die? Remember that betrayal and that other past wound that was festering—how can you forgive that?"

All at once, the vast army chose to stand their ground, applying the blood of Christ and the power of forgiveness to their hearts and minds, so that Satan was once again soundly defeated, and fled in terror. I could hear the deafening sound of God's army chanting, "Victory is ours! Victory is ours, through the shed blood of the Lamb. Victory is ours!" Their declarations filled the air with a sound of heaven when they refused to allow the enemy's victim mentality to take root. Instead, they offered up the most anointed praise to God. This praise was the weapon that caused Satan to lose that battle. The victory chant led to a mighty explosion of glorious praise and worship!

The Lord is saying, "Stand your ground! Do not allow the enemy even an instant of thought." When he comes to assault you with flaming missiles of past hurt and blame, the Lord wants you to hear this: "I will win the war, for the battle is Mine. I will infuse you with My power and you shall stand strong and be My company of overcomers. For even the devastating wounds that you once experienced that could have destroyed you are healed by My righteous

right hand!" Today, the Lord says, "YOU will not lose ground if you PRAISE your way to victory, letting go of past hurts and wounds by the power of forgiveness, and standing strong as My company of overcomers! I have called you to OVERCOME! Victory is yours, so grab hold of it with everything in you and march on!"

"And they have defeated him by the blood of the Lamb and by their testimony. And they did not love their lives so much that they were afraid to die" (Revelation 12:11).

"Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

Oh God, only by your grace can we keep your Word. Give us a heart to really love you. Let us not offer you long, insincere speeches. Let us prove our love for you by placing you first in the valley of decision.

BEING QUIET AND STILL

There is a path far less traveled, the path of solitude. In solitude we come to realize that "being" is more important than "doing" or "getting".

In other words: Being with Him is more vital than doing good things for Him or getting more stuff from Him.

In solitude we discover who we really are and how valuable our relationship with God is. The world is loud and pushy, but as we get alone with God and separate ourselves we become aware of His resting presence. In the silence, our hearts become full of love for the Father, and we learn to move past His hands to His sweet embrace.

I am not afraid of being quiet and still before God, I yearn for it with all my heart, so that my raging thoughts would quiet so my heart could reach out to God.

"Be still and know that I am God" (Psalms 46:10).

"Be still in the presence of the LORD, and wait patiently for him to act" (Psalms 37:7a).

"I wait quietly before God" (Psalms 62:1a)

"Let all that I am wait quietly before God, for my hope is in him" (Psalms 62:5).

(Young's Literal Translation)

"Only – for God, be silent, O my soul, For from Him is my hope" (Psalms 62:5).

And, as hard as it is to believe, the Lord longs for our company, for intimacy with us. He wants us to know we have a higher purpose. He yearns for us to go deeper, and bask in His presence, in His arms, where we can finally rest and find true contentment and security.

UPWARD INTO HIS CHAMBERS

"O my dove, that art in the cleft of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely" (Song of Solomon 2:14, KJV).

Let us begin our journey toward the Lord by going into His "chambers" where He dwells. The Lord offers us intimate communion and a deeper love relationship with Him. He calls to His Bride to "rise up," and prepares stairs for those who hunger to climb higher into His presence. Our quest for intimacy can begin today as we seek the satisfaction we long for, and for which we were created. He stands bidding us to be partakers of His holy presence. He is calling those who want to move past the holy place through the veil into the "Holy of Holies". He is calling us upward toward personal intimacy and into a new realm of glory. Each step in the staircase represents a new level of intimacy obtained. It should be our deepest desire to keep climbing higher each day as we yearn for deeper communion with the Lord that will lead to our spiritual growth.

A deep longing is being birthed in the heart of His Bride for divine encounters of the God kind. Not just a self-serving desire for only His blessings, but an earnest seeking of His face alone. He is placing in us an intense spiritual hunger and desire for Him as He reveals the secret entrance to the stairway. In that place we meet with Him alone. His Bride will not stop until she has His heart. These stairs contain

greater levels of communion. With each step the level of intimacy increases. When we travel upward there's no turning back. We are forever transformed by His love.

Jesus is always right beside us. At times He stands unnoticed and unseen, back in the shadows wanting desperately to reveal Himself to His people in a personal way.

FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD

Friendship with God is reserved for the obedient. We must fear Him and tremble at His Word. As we sit before Him to revere and worship Him, we have the greatest gift ever given to mankind, intimate communion with the Lord. He shares His heart with us and our heart is connected to His. We cannot be His spokesmen if we don't sit at His feet to listen. A friend shares with a trusted friend, but not with everyone. They share secrets. The secrets of the Lord are only revealed to those who sit before Him. Why? Because they take the time to listen. The spiritually hungry sit before Him daily, hanging on every word He says.

KNOWING THE SOUND OF THE LORD

When He calls you, what is your initial reaction? Are we sensitive enough to know His knock from every other knock? Can we hear the sound of the Lord found in His manifest presence? It is only through spending time with the Lord in personal, quiet solitude that anyone can be taught the distinction between the sounds and truly grasp His ways.

Dear Father, I long to be alone with you in my prayer garden. I desire to rest in your presence and be transformed by your glory. I know if I'm faithful to build my relationship with you, you will use my life for your glory.

THE DOOR

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20).

The door to His manifest presence is wide open. We have a standing invitation bidding us to come in. It's up to us whether or not we will use this door and sup with Him in intimate fellowship. He is knocking on the door of your heart right at this very moment as you are sitting here reading this pearl. This means that we must prayerfully keep our spirit "poised" toward Him, so that we will be able to recognize His presence when He comes and makes known His desire to fellowship with us.

PRINCE OF PEACE

"The LORD gives strength to his people; the LORD blesses his people with peace" (Psalm 29:11).

I pray peace over your precious children right now, dear God, whatever they may be facing. You are there—the Prince of Peace! Surround them with your all-consuming love, and bring them peace. The Lord says over you right now:

"'Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,' says the LORD, who has compassion on you" (Isaiah 54:10).

The Lord wakes me up without warning, "morning by morning" in the night season. I "sup" with the Master and He with me. I sit at His feet in His company. My 'inner ears' open that I may clearly and distinctly hear the spirit of prophecy speaking.

DIVINE REST

If you're not resting in God, if you're not committing, delighting, and trusting in the Lord, then you will be angry and frustrated and you will fret. Wait patiently before Him, because the only thing God has to do is speak forth that Word and you will find rescue.

A JOYFUL BRIDE

If we are the mature bride of Jesus Christ then we should be prepared and ready. (Revelation 19:7-9) We should be full of joy knowing that time for the wedding is fast approaching. Rather than allowing this life to tear us down with our faces downcast, depressed out of our minds, we need to declare, "I am too blessed to be depressed. I can't wait for the wedding." I believe the Lord is coming for a prepared bride, but also a joyful bride—full of anticipation with a heart bursting with love for her Bridegroom. Get your eyes off of the temporary things of this world and gaze into the eyes of Jesus—your Heavenly Bridegroom. It is in that steady gaze that all things become new.

LIFE IS A VAPOR

The past is the past; you can't go back, nor can you change a thing. So why do we spend so much time fretting over things we cannot change? Why do we beat our-

selves up over our failures and our forgiven-and-forgotten past? The Bible says to REPENT and turn away from the world then forget the past and move on.

Your future history is not yet written. What will be placed on the blank pages of your life? The heavenly scribes have pen in hand ready to write your story! The cloud of witnesses is watching. Regardless of what has happened in your past, you can start a fresh chapter. You are the author of your story, depending on the choices you make.

Make the right choices; choose wisely what will be written about your life. "Life is as a vapour," (James 4:14) and before you know it you will stand in eternity. What legacy will you leave on this earth for those who come after you? Will your life inspire others to run hard after God?

The great battle against the flesh is your greatest enemy! Your flesh is what keeps you from completing your race well. Run well, die to self-love, and embrace your wonderful Savior.

I pray that this year will be one of restoration and preparation! If you are in a pit, look up for your Redeemer stands with eyes full of love ready to pull you out and give you a fresh start. Can you see the love in His eyes? Can you hear Him whisper your name? Can you feel his loving touch? Oh, how He loves you, beloved. Oh, how He loves you and me!

THE KING'S COLLEGE

"You are poor to look upon, but inwardly you are full of wealth. You seem low, but you are exceedingly high." – Michael Molinos

"The Lord is waiting to roll up His sleeves and go to work, if we allow Him to re-form us as He chooses, using whatever "tools" He may deem necessary to accomplish His purpose." – Wade Taylor

Yes, the Lord does have a "King's college", a special school of the Spirit, but few will enroll and fewer still will graduate. Why? Because it hurts to become a chosen vessel. God is looking for meek vessels who will give Him glory rather than seeking it for themselves. There are few truly broken people, but many who claim to be broken and are not. How can we differentiate between the two? We can't. Only God knows; it is not our place to judge.

But haven't you ever noticed how some of God's vessels carry an unusual presence of God over their lives? I love to study people who carry that unusual presence of God. They seem to have a special touch from Him known as His "abiding manifest presence". What causes this? Does God play favorites? Why do some seem to walk in a depth of experience and revelation while others do not? The answer is found in the Key that unlocks His presence. You may ask, "What is the Key?" The Key is found in one word: "meekness".

This may not be the only key, but it is one that God simply cannot ignore. By earthly standards, students in this school of the Spirit appear to be shattered beyond recognition, but by heavenly standards, they are persons of meekness. Meekness does not come through a prayer line, but only when our stubborn nature is buried in His abounding love, where we are content to behold His loving face; where we have a yielded life, a humble heart, pliable in the Master's hand, and all that remains is the brilliance of His divine nature now reflecting. This causes an inner wealth to develop within us.

The people who once knew you will not perceive you to be the same person who you were before you allowed Him to mold you; your personality becomes radically altered; you talk less and love God more. He gives you His power because you prove yourself to be trustworthy in this school, which few choose to enter.

Our beloved God is ready to seize you with His presence as you "wait patiently for Him". You have the power to unlock that door through meekness.

Behold! He stands at the door and knocks; He bids us to come in. . .

My friends, a remnant of people throughout the ages have enrolled in the King's College and have been transformed; all the resistance was removed from inside them. John the Baptist went through his school in the desert; Paul learned in Arabia. If we yield, we too will learn through our circumstances as we make Him Lord of our lives.

Classes for this school of meekness are always open for enrollment. Will you allow yourself, in spite of the pain, to enter this school and be forever changed?

As other pioneers of the past have blazed a trail led by your presence, let me also blaze a trail and leave a legacy for others who come behind me. Give me a heart to know you in an even greater capacity.

RELATIONSHIP

Why do I believe what I believe? It can be summed up in one word—"relationship". It's not about slavishly following a long list of authoritarian rules lest I anger God. It's all about knowing Him personally and wanting to please Him. The religious leaders in Jesus' day emphatically claimed to know God, but killed Jesus when He came to rescue mankind. Jesus uncompromisingly rebuked them for their hard hearts and blatant, unrepentant hypocrisy. When we know Jesus in a personal way, we can't help but love and desire Him. In turn, we will desire to obey Him because we know He has our very best interests in mind.

PRESSING INTO JESUS

For some time the Lord has been speaking to me about the word "pressing". What does it mean to press? What does it mean to "constrain the Lord"? When you hear the word "constrain", sometimes you think in terms of restraining or limiting someone's activity. But when I use the word "constrain", I'm talking about a tugging or pulling on someone.

To constrain, to pull, or press speaks of a heart attitude that desperately wants closeness with God—someone who's eager and excited to be His friend. I long to see an entire generation with a holy hunger, eager to press into God. They have a desire to constrain the Lord, to come and dwell with Him.

In *Strong's Concordance*, the word "constrain" is defined as *to compel, to urge and to press*. This is not an ordinary request; it is a persistent, heart-felt yearning and, as a result, such people press in and stay close, listening and able to hear the still, small voice of the Spirit. It's a heart that pushes for a deeper level of fellowship, that's not satisfied with a casual encounter.

How many people do we know right now who want nothing more than a casual encounter with God? "Oh God, just come and bless me." "Oh God, just do something." But they're not compelling Him to come and to stay close. I find that, if we compel Him, if we're really hungry for Him, if we press in, He will come and meet with us there.

The dilemma is that we are an impatient people. If the Lord doesn't come within five minutes, we give up and grow weary of waiting then go on to the next activity. If we don't see results within an hour, we become discouraged. And if that's so, we need to ask ourselves whether this is something that's so deep on the inside of us that we can't help but call out to Him, "Jesus, son of David, come into my life and move me by your Spirit. Come by your Spirit and talk to me! Come by your Spirit and walk through my home. I want you 24/ 7. Jesus, turn my life upside down!"

Is it just a prayer, something you say without conviction, or do you mean it with all your heart and all your guts? Because if it means everything to you and you don't give up in defeat, He will come and move in your life, but He wants to know you mean business. Do you really mean business? Many say they want to press in, but in the end

they are really only offering lip service. . .

Jesus, the sweet Master, is truly worth pursuing no matter what it takes. If you have to pursue and pray and fast for weeks or hours a day then do it. Just do it. Press in and constrain the Lord to come and manifest Himself to you, resisting the temptation to give up before you see it happen. If you want more of God, don't take no for an answer, because He wants that kind of fellowship with you, more than you could even dream. Don't give up. Never give up! Pursue Him as if your life depended on it, because in these last days it really does!

"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him" (John 14:21).

**When God thinks of you He smiles really big and says, 'I've done well—you are one of kind. Yes, you are. . .'
Then He smiles again!**

WRAP YOUR PRESENCE AROUND THEM

I pray that the POWER of God would flow into the lives and hearts of my dear friends reading this—that your nature, divine love and overwhelming peace would transform them. Wrap your manifest presence around them like a warm blanket and may that LOVE make ALL things new in their life. In Jesus' name, AMEN! LET IT BE, OH GOD!

THE ANOINTING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

When God uses you to touch another person's heart through your heart, the anointing of God is flowing over and through you, by the work of the Holy Spirit. From the very throne room of God, it flows like a river of love, through the hearts of believers, to bring life to all it touches.

That anointing comes upon those who love God more than they love their own lives, and loving others as they love themselves. His anointing flows through us as we open our hearts to love others.

This happens in order to demonstrate God's love and power.

(Luke 4:18-19 NKJV) **"The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the Gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,**

To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; {19} **To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD."**

1. The anointing enables us to preach the gospel to the poor.

2. The anointing empowers us to heal and restore the lives of broken people.

3. The anointing allows us to proclaim the good news of freedom to the captives.

4. The anointing moves to open blind eyes.

5. The anointing motivates us to set people free.

6. The anointing flows according to God's timing as He wills.

So move out full of the anointing of the Spirit to heal a hurting world.

An intense spiritual hunger and deep longing is building in the heart of His Bride for Him alone. It is in that place that He reveals His heart.

WISE MEN STILL SEEK HIM

The Bible tells us that wise men had been searching for Jesus, the Christ child, and when they found Him, they were ecstatic. They had discovered their long-awaited Redeemer, the Savior of all mankind. The same thing can be said of all those who find Jesus as Savior. The Christmas season—the time of His birth—is the perfect time to meditate on the meaning of His birth, for the truth is that wise men still seek Him.

His greatest heart's desire is that we seek Him and get to know Him intimately. He dwells in our hearts so that we might truly know and grasp His heart cry, having the "richest measure of the divine Presence, and become a body wholly filled and flooded with God Himself" (Ephesians 3:19b, Amp.). When we seek Him with hearts bursting with love and hunger for Him, God inclines His ear and joins us, for He has found true companionship. Will He find that in you this year?

"Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33).

As my Kingdom comes, chains are broken, lives are set free by my power, and people are delivered from bondage. When my Kingdom comes mountains have to move; the earth shakes with the very manifest glory of God, and every tongue declares that I am Lord.

A CRITICAL SPIRIT

I believe that, in the last days, a critical spirit is one of the enemy's most powerful weapons. Those with critical spirits usually dwell on the negative, searching for flaws rather than looking for the best in others. From the outset they tend to filter everything they see through their own experiences and quickly jump to conclusions. Those who are in bondage to a critical spirit tend to attract complaints and have issues with others with very little motivation. In the end, they become islands unto themselves—isolated from others.

Over the years I've come across many critical-spirited people, and, to be honest, they're absolutely draining. That mind-set literally sucks the life out of those around them. Early on in my ministry, I had a brother in my church who embraced a certain favored revelation on a particular aspect of Christ. If I didn't phrase every sermon according to his pet teaching, he brought my "error" to my attention. It was a soul-numbing experience to face such unrelenting criticism. Such people never try to see the best; they always major on the flaw as they perceive it. It is possible to be so analytical that you destroy the very essence of the message.

Many in the body of Christ tend to embrace certain pet revelations, filtering *everything* through them, and when others fail to respond in kind they become critical and label the offenders as wrong, often writing them off entirely. They refuse to offer the benefit of the doubt,

and jump immediately to judgment. At this point I think it's important to realize how easy it is to get off course, emphasizing certain favorite truths while ignoring or downplaying others that are equally as important. Our goal is to remain balanced, modeling our lives after the person of Christ, who was balanced in everything He did. In fact, I venture to say that we can get so focused on certain things that we open ourselves to a spirit of legalism, which does not please God, and, in the end, becomes another gospel that God hates. This also occurs in regard to ministry styles or ministry philosophies. Especially after having success that only God could give, it's easy to fall into a spirit of arrogance and pride believing we're somehow superior to those who don't laud our personal stances that were, in fact, created by mere humans rather than God. "God *opposes the proud* but shows favor to the humble" (James) 4:6.

There's an old saying that, "We tend to judge others by their actions, and we judge ourselves by our intentions." The truth is we cannot rightly judge anyone else, because we cannot see into their hearts. Consequently, we should be content to judge only ourselves and seek to bring our own lives into alignment with God's Word. (See 1 Cor. 11:31.) I believe that a critical, controlling spirit often permanently ends relationships between friends, sowing discord instead of unity. This ought not to be happening.

The Lord is looking for meek vessels who prefer their brothers and sisters above themselves—those who are slow to rush to judgment and have teachable spirits. They look for the good rather than the flaws in others, always

offering them the benefit of the doubt, out of love, because that's what Jesus does for us.

I realize that balance is required in this area, and we are not to embrace false doctrine or sin. But Isaiah 25:3 says that the Lord will keep them in perfect peace, whose "minds are stayed *on Him*," and not on the faults of others.

Romans 14:10: **"Why do you criticize and pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you look down upon or despise your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God."** (v. 12) **"And so each of us shall give an account of himself - give an answer in reference to judgment—to God.** (v. 13) **"Then let us no more criticize and blame and pass judgment on one another, but rather decide and endeavor never to put a stumbling block or an obstacle or a hindrance in the way of a brother"** (The Amplified Bible).

Let's use this as an opportunity to rid ourselves of those attitudes that don't please God, and love our brothers as we love ourselves, because it will only be through the unity of the saints that God is able to change the world!

He is longing to enter our homes; He wants to find a quiet place to rest. He desires someone to keep him company in the night. Will you be that person?

HEART CRY

"My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice" (Song of Solomon 2:9).

"My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Look! There he stands behind our wall, gazing through the windows, peering through the lattice" (Song of Solomon 2:9 NIV).

I see You standing alone looking through the window. I will not keep You standing; I bid you come and sit with me in sweet intimacy. Reveal yourself to me, for I am not content with just hearing stories of your presence. I want to discover You myself! Lord, I want to keep You company in the night when others are tucked away in bed. I want to sit up with You and just love on You. I embrace You, I love You, and I want to have a holy feast unto You. I want to be a constant companion of my God! Lord, I refuse to allow your head to be covered with dew from the night. I will meet You in our secret place. I will answer You when You call. When You announce your presence I will open the door to my heart. Come in, dearest Lord, and commune with me.

THE GENTLE WHISPER

There is an ever-so-beautiful moment in the Scriptures when the prophet Elijah feels God's presence. The

Bible tells us that a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart, but God was not in the wind. After the wind, there was an earthquake, but God was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. It was the whisper of God (See 1 Kings 19:12). Today we can hear the whisper when and where we least expect it: in the weeping of a wounded heart, in the face of a hungry child or in the beautiful smile of a man with special needs. When we slow down from the busyness of a cluttered life and tune our ear to His whisper we will hear the most beautiful song—the song of love for His creation. And nowhere else in this world is there a whisper more sweet or divine.

RESTING IN HIS PRESENCE

We come to Daddy God just as we are, hang ups and all, and quietly rest in His presence. In that place we are still and know that He is our God. Day by day He is changing us even when we feel absolutely nothing is happening. We continue to hold our hearts before Him, soaking in His loving presence. Intimacy grows slowly at times, but we can't go by our feelings. Rather we choose to trust Him for He is at work in our hearts. Play anointed worship and just rest in humble adoration. You don't have to say anything, just enjoy sitting with Him there in your secret place. You can do this for hours, knowing He is there with you. I sometimes set out two chairs, one for me and another for Him. I rest in His tender love. If you lie at

His feet on the floor, you may sometimes fall asleep there, but don't worry, beloved, because He loves it when you relax enough to sleep in His arms. As you continue to spend time together, intimacy grows, and you are transformed into His likeness.

DADDY GOD

"...you have received the spirit of adoption, the Spirit producing sonship in the bliss of which you cry, Abba Father!" (Romans. 8:15 Amp.)

He says to you today:

"How I long to reveal myself as Father. How I long for my children to know me as Daddy. How I long to show them what it really means to be a father. And even more than that, I long for them to experience Me as Father in their lives. My heart yearns to be the father they have desired but only dreamed of, to protect, love and cherish them. My heart cries out to hear them respond to My wooing."

Knowing God intimately and feeling the beat of His heart will cause me to trust Him more as His words become life, health, and peace.

THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. 8And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. 9And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed *are* they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God" (Revelation 19:7-9).

Did you know the Marriage supper of the Lamb is imminent? The day is drawing closer when our Heavenly Bridegroom will "call" for His mature Bride, and she will sit down at the table with Him at the feast of the Lamb.

The Lord's desire is to find a bride who has made herself ready for Him, one who has arrayed herself in a *righteous* garment of her own free will; she is not forced into this, but given a choice, she has chosen Him over everyone and everything else. It is through her "faithful acts" of "supping with Him", and by answering His "knocks" on the door of her spirit, that she will have made herself "ready" as His mature Bride.

We are living in the age of preparation. It is our choice whether or not to prepare ourselves for that day. Maturity is not the result of standing in a prayer line and is not imparted from one to another, but comes with time by the choices we make. Will we choose to be like the wise

virgins of Matthew 25 and keep fresh oil in our lamps, or will we slumber and sleep on that day our Heavenly Bridegroom returns?

In the natural realm, we think of a healthy relationship between a bride and groom as developing over a period of time. A bride *glories* in her beloved groom. It is no different in the spirit realm. Do we glory over the one we claim to love most?

As the mature Bride of Christ, we must also spend quality time with our Bridegroom to really get to know Him. As the wedding day approaches, we will hate the moments when we're apart, because passionate desire will replace any notion of mere obligation or duty. We will discover ourselves falling more in love and taking our greatest delight in staying close.

THE TANGIBLE LOVE OF THE CROSS

Let me ask you a straightforward question: Would a God who knowingly sent His own child to die an excruciating death, to save a lost world, suddenly stop caring for His children and forget the very ones for whom His Son died?

God's love for you became tangible through the cross; He is a loving Father who wants only the very best for His children. He sees your every move during every moment of every day, and it's against His very nature to abandon you during times of trouble. His love can never diminish

or end, for it is the one and only perfect source of joy, for which there is no equal. God's love did not begin at the cross, and, in fact, it had no beginning and will have no end, because God Himself is not a created being, but has always existed. Long before time ever began on Earth, He loved us.

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

Jesus suffered a cruel fate to give us everlasting life in the world to come and peace in the midst of our raging storms here on Earth. Hardships will mean nothing to us until we believe by faith that God not only understands our pain but will heal it. Whatever hurts us, we can nail to the cross, because Jesus took it there and destroyed its power over us, enabling us to be more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

With that in mind, now is the time to let go of any false notions that the devil has been feeding you. Ask God to help you break through to believe that His love is sufficient and trustworthy. Embrace that love and choose to trust Him. Realize that, whatever challenges you now face, Jesus has already been there to prepare the way through it for you, and make you victorious, because He's rooting for you, cheering you on, with a remarkable plan for your success. Fix your eyes on His wonderful face, telling yourself the truth—that you are more than a conqueror. Meditate on Scriptures that renew your mind, and refuse to believe what you see with your natural eyes. *Refuse to agree with*

anything that doesn't agree with God's Word.

Now is the time to draw near to the Father, believing everything He has said about you, so refuse to believe the negative words of the enemy. Refuse to let him accuse you of things from your past, and tell him that he's mistaken you for someone else, because you are a brand new creation in Christ, bought with the precious blood of the Lamb. In so doing, you will render him harmless and rise up to win your battles. The victory is yours so rise up, and grab hold of it now, through the tangible love of the cross!

The Lord is calling His bride upward into the chambers of intimacy where He reveals His heart and longs to hear the depths of our very soul. He never grows weary of listening. What sweet communion you share with Him. Loving and patient is our Lord. . .

THE SECRET

I want to tell you a secret you may never have heard before. There's a special place you can go that's so sweet and more real than mere words could ever express—a place that will cause you to raise your hands and fall to your knees, where you can't help but weep with great joy. In this special place you can bask in God's love and lie at His feet for hours on end. It's here where He draws near to you and imparts spirit and life into the dark, empty places inside you. It's a rare place where the very fire of heaven is released to work deep in the recesses of your soul.

In His presence you behold Him in His beauty. His face shines upon you and you see Him as He really is, a Father so in love with His precious child that He desires to draw near.

"And the Lord came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth" (1 Samuel 3:10).

Did you get that? "And the Lord came, and stood!" Think about it! The Lord came and stood near Samuel and called him by name! Do you know, dear friend, that the Lord wants to come and stand beside you? He wants to reveal himself to you in a profound way through the presence of the Holy Spirit. I wish I could communicate with words what I'm feeling as I write this. To think that the LORD HIMSELF would come and stand right beside me and call my name! That stunning revelation truly melts my heart!

TRANSFORMATION

The secret to our breakthrough comes when we humble ourselves and admit where we are weak. For the Lord is close to the broken and will walk to the ends of the earth with someone who is teachable and admits that they need Him. I once told the Lord "I am an absolute mess—BUT I am your mess!" We are His—therefore He will bring beauty from the ashes of our lives when we give Him our brokenness. It is God who gives us the will to change and His HOLY SPIRIT will bring about our transformation. Remember, my precious friend, You are His and He loves you too much to leave you the way you are. He holds you close and will walk with you into Christ-likeness. When others walk out HE WALKS IN! God is far more patient and kind to us than we are with each other or ourselves. Dear Lord, walk into the room of my dear friends and embrace them even now. . .

WAVES OF TENDERNESS

Take a moment right now—pause. Ponder this thought: *Oh how much God loves me. His great love, kindness and mercy are new every morning. How great is His faithfulness to me.* Let that revelation wash over you as fresh gratitude stirs from within. With great passion, acknowledge His goodness to you, and from deep in your Spirit begin to honor Him with heartfelt praise and worship. Weep before Him and cherish that special moment.

Dear Father, I pray that waves of your tenderness and love would wash over your people as they read this. Consume hearts afresh right now. Let your manifest presence come even now, as you hold your people close. Come walking into the room where they are reading this. Thank you for your love, in Jesus' name.

COALS OF FIRE FROM THE ALTAR

"Oh God, let my words be your words! Please let me carry your heart to a hungry, famished people that long for You but don't yet realize it. Let me not settle for mere sermons, but touch my lips with a coal of fire off your altar that I may communicate your deep heart cry from the throne room."

"They couldn't take their eyes off them—Peter and John standing there so confident, so sure of themselves! Their fascination deepened when they realized these two were laymen with no training in Scripture or formal education. They recognized them as companions of Jesus" (Acts 4:13, MSG).

"Then the LORD touched my mouth and said, 'See, I have put my words in your mouth!'" (Jer. 1: 9, NLT)

"Now go, and do as I have told you. I will help you speak well, and I will tell you what to say" (Ex. 4:12, NLT).

A CHEERFUL HEART

"**A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones"** (Proverbs 17:22). A rejoicing heart is not the result of a life without problems, but is born through the one who sees with eyes of faith. We all face problems each day, but we must choose to rise above them and therefore be an "overcomer". Our true joy is in close fellowship with God. A joyful heart is one that discovers a divine intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. In that we can rejoice!

STAY FAITHFUL

Going hard after God will mean loving God not just in word but also in deed. Sweet surrender is the first step to empowerment and the anointing that comes only when we refuse to settle for anything less than serving God with all our hearts, souls, minds and strength. It is hard to convince our finite minds that carrying a cross can bring contentment, but yielding and sweet surrender will bring powerful results if we remain faithful to the end.

MORE GLORY

Moses knew the Lord like few others ever have. He knew how to withdraw from the world to fellowship with God. Moses knew the ways of God. He was a friend of

God, a companion, an intimate of God. He also left us the challenge to get to know our God face to face—to walk toward the burning bush and cry out for more glory.

BELOVED MASTER

Beloved Master, I long to lie at your feet each day, to anoint them with my love! Every tear I shed You hold as priceless. Each moment I am being transformed into your image as I worship and adore You. Let my love for You grow each day. Lift me to higher realms of understanding. And, Lord, as I seek to know You face to face, lead me to wider spheres of service. Purify my thoughts with the cleansing waters of your Word. Search me and bring my will into subjection to yours. Sweet Lover of my soul, guide me ever closer.

ALTOGETHER LOVELY

Even as the sun finds its resting place,

When the activity from another busy day begins to draw to a close

I rest.

I rest in the loving arms of my Savior,

I give Him my fears.

I lay my every burden at His feet.

He commands the whirlwind to silence,

And gives me His undivided attention,

As I lay my head against His breast.

All is well when I choose to come away with my Beloved.

It is here that I discover what my heart has yearned for all the while,

Jesus—Sweet Master and Lover of my soul.

For only He is altogether lovely,

Even as the sun finds its resting place—I draw near.

Lord, when you come calling, may I never keep you waiting . . .

TO THE ONE WHO OVERCOMES

"If we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us" (2 Timothy 2:12).

As long as we live, we will have opportunities every day to "choose" to overcome the obstacles in our path or to become apathetic, bored and disinterested in spiritual things. We can choose to draw near and soak in His presence, basking intimately in the manifest presence of God, sharing our deepest heart needs, or we can choose to give up, walking away to become lukewarm and fainthearted, having lost our first love. If we fall in love with Him again, we will be able to endure and choose obedience, so that we can be His overcoming bride in the Kingdom. Even as Adam and Eve had the power to choose, so do we in this life.

"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Rev. 3:21).

We as believers want to be part of the "overcoming" remnant—those who will rise above life's heartaches, struggles and temporary distractions to yield all they are and have, to live passionately for the Lord Jesus, falling in love with Him all over again. These "overcomers" will be on fire, so others can watch them burn brightly with the love of God, clearly seen in an ever-darkening world. In the process they will allow the joy of the Lord to rise up and be their strength. And in the end they will rule and reign

with Christ and be given spiritual authority because they choose to truly become one with Jesus, consumed by Him, body, soul and spirit, and to easily submit to His authority. It is important to note that only when we come under His authority can we be trusted with Kingdom authority.

"To the one who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations" (Rev. 2:26).

May we all hear those cherished words from the Father as we stand before Him—"Well done thou good and faithful servant," because we passionately served the Lord with all that is in us, and willingly became the Father's hands extended, reflecting the love and great salvation of our wonderful Lord.

Lord, help me get back to my first love, daily asking You to fill me anew with Your Spirit, so that when people look at me, they see You. Help me to live and move and have my being in You, so that in the end You are glorified and souls are saved, fulfilling your deepest heart's desires. That in the end I may be counted with the joyful overcomers. Amen.

YOU WILL NOT DROWN

For I hear the Lord saying, "I am YOUR Father, and I will not let you drown. Can you see me walking on the water—ready to lift you out of the things that keep you down? I hear your cry: 'Abba Daddy, please help me—do not ignore my prayers. I feel crushed, abandoned, and discouraged. The waves of fear and doubt have come to

choke the life right out of me,' BUT I say over you, my child, I am your REFUGE and STRENGTH, a very present help in trouble. Come running into my arms, for it is there that I will keep you safe. In times of struggle when you are tempted to give up and run away and call it quits, you are NEVER far from my heart or my arms. Come to me and find refreshment. Let's talk about all that is on your heart. You will NOT drown, nor will these trials overtake you. Let me lift the weight. Let me fill you with Spirit and Life that you may become strong and ready to go again. I say again, COME TO ME—Do not wait—COME . . ."

TO KNOW YOU

Give me a heart to know You—really know You, not just know random facts about You or have a mere intellectual grasp of who You are. I want know You like a close friend, face to face. Even as Adam and Eve walked with You in the "cool of the evening" (Genesis 3:8) in Eden, so I desire to walk with You in my payer garden this VERY evening! To really, really walk with You is my cry tonight!

LOST LAMBS

Father, let me really love those who are down and out as You would love them. Give me a heart to stop for the one, to care enough to love even the unlovable. May I weep for your lost lambs—those caught in the briers of sin and confusion; those who feel no one even cares. Give me a

heart to love and restore rather than walk away and do my own thing. Give me a love that will motivate me to do something, not just feel temporary pity with no response. My heart breaks tonight, oh Father, for your lost and hurting lambs. May I LOVE enough to care for the ones perishing tonight—for the ones who need a father or a friend. Give me a heart to really love as You have loved me. . .

HE STANDS BESIDE YOU

Several years ago, I was going through a really tough time that was really discouraging. I was even questioning my calling. I felt the prophetic voice inside of me being stifled. I knew the devil was working overtime to silence the message within my heart. He did not want people to hear the message of intimacy. Satan knew that, if people really caught this message, it would bring a powerful visitation of the Spirit of God. Satan will do whatever it takes to keep people in religious bondage. Every time I turned around I could feel the enemy weaving a plan to silence me. This made me exceedingly discouraged.

One day, I was driving my vehicle down the road, hurrying to get to an appointment. I felt the Spirit of God stir inside of me. I knew He wanted to meet with me. I obeyed and parked my car near a park and got out to walk across the grounds. As soon as I sat by a tree and placed my hood over my face, His presence came on so strongly that I could not compose myself, and I was undone. I literally felt like the Lord had come to stand right beside me. I could not

see Him with my eyes, but I knew He was there standing to my right.

Some may not believe this, but I know what I experienced. For some time I could not move because His presence was there in such power. I wept and wept and wanted more privacy so I got into my SUV and lay face forward on the back seat. His presence continued to be poured out to me. I knew He had come to let me know He was with me, to reassure me that He had a plan for my life, and that His words in my heart would have a platform in His time. That encounter saw me through some tough days ahead. Today I have a platform as God was faithful to move me out of that lukewarm place. I will never forget that precious presence.

THE KNOCKS OF GOD

"Behold I stand at the door and knock..."

(Revelation 3:20a)

Beloved, God is calling out to those who desire to go deeper into His presence. This call is the yearning of the Bridegroom, wooing His bride to come aside into a much higher level of communion. Can you hear it? I hear Him tenderly calling your name and asking you to draw near.

The Bridegroom stands and waits, gently knocking, hoping His Bride is awake and has an ear attuned to His

invitation to come. What a gentleman He is. He stands and politely knocks. He doesn't knock in a loud or demanding way, just loud enough to get our attention. His eyes are filled with adoration, and His anticipation builds—will we answer the door? He knocks because He has a special place in His heart for His beloved Bride.

The "knocking on the door" is a prophetic picture of a love-struck Bridegroom, Jesus calling out to His Bride. He is asking her to come away with Him, calling her to a special place where He pours out His tender love and affection—in the secret place, the resting place of His presence, a walk in the garden, the Holy of Holies—the very courts of the Lord. The knocks of God are meant to get our attention; will we hear them? Will our ears be tuned to hear Him knocking when He bids us come, or will we be too busy or too distracted to notice?

I sense the Lord calling His church to awaken to the deeper things of God, calling her out of slumber to shake off the lukewarm Laodicean spirit that keeps us from entering the very chambers of the King. The spirit that makes us apathetic and bored, unable to stir up interest, let alone passion for the One who died on a cruel cross in our place. For the Lord will have a body, a church within the church that will be sensitive enough to hear Him knocking, and run into the chambers of intimacy and rest there. It is there that we will bask in His love, transformed into His image, if we are willing.

If we are willing—that's the key phrase here. We have a choice to make. Are we going to go about business as usual

and leave the Lord knocking outside the door? Will we fail to be ready when He comes to take us to the marriage supper of the Lamb? Or will we set aside all earthly things, filling our lamps with oil like the wise virgins of Matthew 25?

Our inheritance must be taken seriously. Now is the time to choose. The Bridegroom is coming, so the question is how will you respond to His knocking?

SEEKING

Seeking the Lord means to seek His presence. "Presence" is a common translation of the Hebrew word "face". We are to seek His face—literally. This is the Hebraic form of coming to God. To be before his face is to be in His presence. Let me encourage you to seek the Lord. Seek His presence continually. **"Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near"** (Isaiah 55:6).

THE TWO ROADS

There are two roads you can take in ministry. We get to choose which of those roads we take. The first path is the road of self-promotion where we jump ahead of God and "perform" without the anointing; where we blow our own horn and boast about the things we do for Jesus. We must be so careful not to use "testimonies" as means to

self-promote. Such ministries are short lived and burn out quickly when the winds of adversity blow. The second road is the path of humility, dependence, patience and preparation. This road is long and windy and takes great diligence and patience. Those on this road are content to love God and worship before Him alone. Even if that means they never have a platform or a following.

When God finds such a rare breed, He will use them to be His mouthpiece and carry His tender heart. To be honest, these messengers are very, very rare—1 in 1000. Job 33:23: "If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness." Having the genuine touch of God on your ministry is worth the wait; anyone can hype up a crowd and substitute clamor and noise for the anointing, but end-time messengers open the heavens when they minister. They carry the very heart of God with a deep presence, and after God uses them on assignment, they run back into the secret place where they rest in His presence and ravish the heart of God as a true lover and friend. The first road looks for shortcuts and thinks nothing of "using" God and His people. The second road is that of "knowing" God and adoring Him while lying at His feet. Dear Lord, may we choose the right road and be your true friends. May we fall in love with your face again and not just your gifts. You are the Giver of all good Gifts! You are my heart's desire and I will seek You first.

"The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend. Then Moses would return to the camp . . ." (Exodus 33:11 a)

IT IS ESSENTIAL

I sense the Lord saying it is "essential" that you don't take a shortcut regarding "preparation". As you consistently worship the Lord out of a pure heart He will then appoint you and anoint you to do the work of the ministry. In this season He has called you to prepare your heart. Spend time investing in His presence. Have integrity in the things no one sees. **"If you build God a house of devotion, He will build you a house of ministry"** (Walter Beuttler).

Do hidden ministry now. Minister before the Lord alone, and then you will minister in front of others in power. You can only bring others to the place where you are. You can only impart to others what you have. NO time spent in His presence is wasted time, but INVESTED time. Fall in love with the Lord alone and not with the idea of a ministry. And out of that devotion will flow a powerful and beautiful ministry that will touch the world. "Prepare," says the Lord!

THE HERE AND NOW

There is so much emphasis on the here and now. Can we have that big house, the fancy car, the promotion that brings prestige and honor during this lifetime? *What do people think of me? How can I impress others?* We focus on education, making money, and climbing the corporate ladder. Although in themselves those things aren't necessarily wrong, it brings up an honest and profound

question: Where will I stand in eternity?

One trillion years from now I will certainly be in existence—but where will I spend that time? What does it really do for me if I gain the full world but I lose my very soul? What does it benefit my family if we enjoy notoriety and privilege but, in the end, they all burn in hell because I lived as a hypocrite and refused to train them up?

Will I have the blood of my family on my hands when I stand before Almighty God? Will I have to live, knowing for all eternity that my children grew up to reject Christ because of my fainthearted, apathetic life?

Woe to them that know the way but refuse to walk in it. I know it's not popular today to speak the truth, but I will not stand before the Lord having watered down the gospel to no effect. I write this morning's devotion while looking deep within my own heart and life. I write with intense love and affection for others. I carry a burning burden this morning that just won't lift. That said, I'm not concerned about being popular with man, rather I desire to see a great heart transformation in those obsessed with the here and now.

I don't want anyone to stand before the Lord "poor, blind and naked" (Rev.3:17) when they knew better. These profound questions are not meant to offend but to hopefully shake some out of slumber. It is NOT too late to turn away and embrace a loving Father who adores you and desires to embrace you. Run into His arms. He's waiting. . .

THE BACKSLIDER

Lord, I sense that it's time to call the backsliders home—those who no longer hold true to your holy Word, who excuse sin and celebrate evil. In the Book of Hosea you describe the incredible pain You feel when you see them wander far away from You. You express your undying love to them even though they have chosen to rebel. I thank You, Lord, that right now You are wooing them back with your undying love. You made this stunning promise: **"I will heal their backsliding; I will love them freely..."** (Hosea 14:4) We are holding You to that promise, Lord, declaring that they are returning, even today, feeling the tug of the Holy Spirit on their hearts—hearts that are desperate for You.

To backslide means to "turn back" or "turn away"—to leave your first love, to desert the gospel for the ways of the world. Lord, I pray for restoration and revival for those who have grown cold and walked away without realizing they have signed their own death warrants. Open their eyes and ears to see the truth—let them grow to hate their sin and yearn for righteousness, truth and obedience, and yearn for Your open arms.

(See 1 Kings 11:9, Revelation 2, Galatians 1:6, 7; 3:1-5, , 1 Timothy 5:15, Psalms 125:5, 2 Timothy 4:10, Jeremiah 14:7, Luke 9:62, Matthew 5:13, Proverbs 26:11, John 15:6, Hebrews 6:8)

Father, let them see their end if they fail to return. Help them run, run, run home to Your warm embrace before

it's too late. Let them be quickly and forever disenchanted with and despise the things of the world and fall in love with You all over again.

Father, I pray against the slow, ongoing downward spiral that sets in once they're blinded to the truth—that though they think they're doing their own thing, they have fallen into the trap of the enemy. Let them see that they are blind, wretched, poor and naked—truly destitute prodigals once they leave You behind.

Give them no rest for their spirits until they draw near and repent of their rebellion. You promise to restore those who turn back to You and repent; however, You don't respond the same way toward those who continue to reject You. Those who refuse to bow their hearts are called reprobate, and are without remedy, according to Scripture—which means that there is a point of no return, where God says, "Enough," and allows them to go their own way, the way of every rebel—eternal hell. But that is not Your will. Your deepest desire is for every single heart to return to You.

Whether we believe it or not, it is possible to be completely restored to God, who is merciful and always ready and eager to forgive and restore. He may withdraw His presence for a time, to allow us to hit rock bottom and become desperate for Him, but He never abandons those He loves. He still identifies the backslidden as His precious "children" (Jeremiah 3:14), His people—family members who have yet to come home.

If this describes you, it's time to come to the end of yourself, and run back to God in repentance. The nail-scarred hand of our Precious Lord is tenderly reaching out to you to welcome you back. He weeps tears of compassion and longing, because He has been waiting for His prodigal to return. His teardrops fall gently upon your head as you lower your eyes in shame, afraid to even meet His gaze. The foul smell of your past still lingers upon you when He lifts your chin, and with eyes full of love He looks deep into your soul and says these amazing words: "Because you have repented and come back to Me, I have made you clean! I have made all things new. You are no longer a leper or an outcast—instead you are My child!"

The marriage supper of the Lamb is near. The Bridegrrom is coming for His bride, where will you spend tomorrow? Today is the day of salvation, so run into the warm embrace of your Savior! Tomorrow may be too late, so run!

HIS WORKMANSHIP

We are God's arrows. He is the master archer, and our target is our purpose—the destiny for which we were born. He decides when to release us, sending us out toward that destiny. In His perfect timing, He launches us to hit our target with great impact. It's not easy to go through fire, stripping, sanding, and soaking, but they are part of the process of becoming arrows—vessels of honor fit for His use. We are His workmanship and our obedience brings Him honor.

His quiver can be a very dark and lonely place, where we are frustrated and feel that little is being accomplished. But our heavenly Father knows best, and if we're not ready to be used, we will begin our journey prematurely and miss our target entirely, resulting in great frustration and even causing us to question the call of God on our lives.

If you stay in the quiver and wait for the great archer to take you out while applying yourself to knowing and loving God, you will be able to support (prove) the weight of the work. The archer will then select the bow with which to release you to hit your target and accomplish what He has called you to do.

WEDDING GARMENTS

God is looking for a bride willing to be transformed into a "vessel of honor" fit for His use. This transformation takes place in the lives of believers who are proactively submitting to the process of God. This process includes actions or changes that prepare people for the work God has called them to do. This process is never easy work, but rather it is the "molding" and "shaping" through our obedience that transforms us into vessels that bring honor. We are His workmanship.

Revelation 19:7-9 (KJV): **"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And**

to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, these are the true sayings of God."

We see in this text *[see Scripture above] that the Lord's desire is to find a mature bride who has done what is necessary to make herself ready for Him, one who, by her own free will, has arrayed herself in the prescribed wedding garments. She is not forced, but given a choice, and she makes that choice out of reckless abandon for her beloved. We live in the age of preparation. God is now offering us an opportunity to prepare for eternity in His Kingdom, but it is our choice whether or not we will prepare. We may wonder if preparation is even possible, and, if so, what that process encompasses. Adequate preparation is only possible by the power of the Holy Spirit; the training is not easy and requires effort on the part of each individual. Spiritual maturity does not come through a prayer line and is not imparted, but is walked out in the life of each individual as we move in sync with the direction of the Holy Spirit.

THE INVISIBLE CHURCH

We are indeed living in the end of days and we all know it will get worse and worse before the Lord comes and reigns on this earth and uproots all evil. I can't

wait until He returns! We are in the Days of Noah, but the Lord is busy preparing a Bride, and she is making herself ready. God will have a church within the church—a people within a people, His remnant. Many in the church are currently in a backslidden state. They have been engulfed in the "great falling away" through their "itching ears" and disobedience. They have embraced a feel-good gospel—a true Babylonian word—and, slowly but surely, the spirit of Laodicea has choked the presence of God from their lives. Now all that is left is form and religion without Spirit and Life. This has brought about an embracing of the world's system—whatever is cool, trendy, and politically correct.

BUT do not be dismayed. The Heavenly bridegroom is wooing those from the church who will stand firm and become a church within the church—an invisible church known only to God. The wise virgins of Matthew 25 are busy keeping oil in their lamps—behold, the Bridegroom stands at the door and knocks.

TAKE MY HAND

Take me, dear Jesus, I am yours. I abandon my old ways that do not please You, and I embrace You, my sweet Savior. Reveal your heart to me, dear One. I will come close enough to hear You whisper my name. I lean upon You where I can hear Your heartbeat, overwhelmed by Your tender love and mercy. You take my hand and gently guide me upward. Thank You for leading me and guiding me upward in my walk with You. Take me, oh Lord. Have Your way in me for I am Yours. . .

"I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night"
(Song of Solomon 5:2).

I sleep but my heart is awake... Our hearts can always be pulling on the Lord. In this moment may our hearts be like a lamp—burning with love before the throne—even as we sleep.

THERE IS HOPE

"There is hope even if a tree has been cut down that at the scent of water it will sprout again" (Job 14: 7-9).

Do you feel as if your dreams are dead and buried? What happened to make you feel that you lost your last chance? Hear the Word of the Lord today!

"The winds of adversity cannot and will not blow away your divine purpose and destiny. I am the Lord your God, and surely I can cause your hope and dreams to sprout and bloom again! Even if your dreams have been cut down, I am the God of Resurrection and surely I will send My rain to refresh you. Oh, how the enemy has lied to you and sworn that all hope is gone. BUT I WILL HAVE THE LAST WORD and that WORD IS FINAL! Begin again. Embrace Me—and watch Me grow your dreams like a mighty oak tree, standing firm and strong no matter the winds or the drought. Do you sense this Word burning from within? Take a hold of it and let it sprout again! Here comes the rain!"

The Lord is like a soft pillow where the weary can come and rest.

Lord, I find rest in You alone. I find rest in Your presence. I find rest in Your loving arms.

FRAGRANCE

The prayers of those with burning hearts become a true fragrance to the Lord. Our heartfelt prayers fill the golden bowls in heaven. As we study the Scripture, we see a loving Father who describes passionate prayers as **"a sweet-smelling savor"** (2 Cor. 2:15). That's His way of saying how pleased He is when we worship the Lord with ALL our hearts, in no rush to leave.

Sincere, loving prayer and worship is an exquisitely beautiful thing rising from the golden altars where saints with burning hearts romance the divine. They keep the Lord company, speaking to Him as a lover and a friend. It doesn't matter where they worship, whether down on their knees or in a magnificent cathedral. What gets His attention is a burning heart that cries out with sincerity, refusing to leave until it's made a real connection with the Most High. When He finds someone that fits that description, a sweet fragrance wafts toward the throne, and He leans over glory to inhale again. He takes it in and smiles in obvious delight. Someone is offering true worship.

Are you aware that it takes about two thousand flowers to produce one gram of fragrant oil or 9,000 crushed rosebuds to produce a single ounce of perfume? In fact, when you enter a rose garden, the scent is far more powerful in the early morning hours when the dew is still on the roses. In the same way, it takes time and patience soaking in the presence of the Lord in true worship to produce the kind of fragrance that He leans down to inhale.

You might ask, "Isn't loud, enthusiastic praise just as precious to the Lord?" Well, that depends on the spirit with which it's given. However, we must admit that it's easy to praise without actually connecting with the Father's heart in true worship. That's why it's so vital that we examine our hearts, to make sure we're not merely going through the motions, just to get it over with.

I can hear the Lord say:

"I see their hands and hearts lifted in intimate worship—I must draw near to such as these. I must breathe in the fragrance of that kind of worship, for I am well pleased!"

"Those that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth, for God seeketh such to worship him" (John 4:23). Why does He seek them? The answer is because they are so hard to find—rare specimens in today's busy, noisy culture. Noise is cheap, while true worship is as rare and costly as real perfume. But are we willing to pay the price to be true worshipers? Will you be one of those who burns with love before the throne and lets your fragrance warm His heart?

"Let my prayer be accepted as sweet-smelling incense in your presence. Let the lifting up of my hands in prayer be accepted as an evening sacrifice" (Psalm 141:2).

LISTENING

Scripture emphasizes the importance of listening to God, even mentioning it several times throughout the Bible. In the same way, Ezekiel 3:7 refers to the people of Israel as "hard, impudent, and stubborn." And if, like Israel, we have developed a bad habit of not listening, this Scripture also applies directly to us. (See Galatians 6:16.)

A teacher who has invested much time in a particular student needs evidence that the student has truly learned from his wisdom—that the time spent was a good investment. In a spiritual sense, the proof comes when a student's life is transformed to live to glorify God. Where he was once reckless and immature, he now displays maturity, self-control and a teachable heart.

Do we really have a burning desire to be taught and gain understanding? Do we honor and respect wisdom from a "multitude of counselors?" (Proverbs 15:22) Are we diligently seeking God's best in our lives, refusing to compromise our integrity and character? Are we motivated to become wise and apply wisdom to our lives? Are we paying close attention to our teachers, and refusing to pass up opportunities to learn?

WATCH- WAIT- LISTEN- OBEY

God blesses those who draw near, listening to the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit. Often we ignore His

voice, His warnings, and even His vivid red flags because we refuse to listen. If we are not listening we are not learning, and if we are not learning we are not growing. The cycle never stops, and the blessing will not come until we stop what we're doing and begin to watch, wait, listen and obey.

In Proverbs 8:34-35, God instructs us to watch, wait, and search for Him. Notice that these are all action verbs that we should practice every day. In fact, we should be daily alert to things He wants to teach us. And more than just being aware, we should diligently seek wisdom and truth, for Scripture says that those who seek Him will find Him.

HARKENING

I can't help but think of Naaman who wanted to be healed from the leprosy that was destroying his flesh, yet he ran off in an angry rage when God's messenger told him to simply go wash seven times in the Jordan River. It was an awkward, seemingly absurd command that made no sense to his natural mind. Why should he go dip in a dirty river when there were rivers far superior to that one in his own land?

But the river wasn't really the problem in his case. His pride wouldn't let him humble himself enough to obey and be healed. In the end, his leprosy was cured only when he listened to wisdom, changed his mind, humbled his heart, and was obedient to follow a simple but clear instruction

from a godly and anointed man.

In the same way, we must realize that the deeper Christian life requires us to crucify the flesh, humble ourselves and obey when logic says otherwise. It requires active pursuit in seeking, harkening, and studying the Scriptures. As we humble ourselves we are then stripped of pride, and our hearts becomes soft and teachable, yearning more for intimacy than for independence and our own agendas.

THE RAREST JEWEL

There is a quality of spirit deep within the heart that desires a far deeper Christian life. This quality is worth more than great riches, than the rarest jewel, than the greatest talent. It is the quality of a humble and teachable spirit.

True disciples who desire to go deeper are humble and teachable. As we study the life of Abraham, we can plainly see why he was so blessed. More than anything else, he valued instruction and a willingness to keep the commandments of God. Such a desire is much more than just a willingness to listen. We become teachable when our desire to receive wisdom is greater than our desire for comfort.

"Now therefore, listen to me, my children, for blessed are those who keep my ways" (Proverbs 8:32).

In His arms
we forget our pain.
When we gaze into His face
we are never the same. . .

ITCHING EARS

Lord, give me a listening ear to hear Your Word to me—even if it is not comforting or pleasing to my flesh. For even a word of correction from my precious Holy Spirit builds maturity and Christlikeness. We are living in the days of "itching ears" where many only want to hear positive and motivational speeches. But I desire Your heart for me, I desire even your loving correction, for how can I become more like You if I don't change? Father, I throw off any lukewarm spirit that would come to choke Your life—giving words to me.

Change me and transform me. I thank You that You love me too much to leave me the way I am. I thank You for meddling with my flesh and bringing forth the beauty of the Lord when I yield in all things. I desire to reflect your face, so search my heart and whatever You find that is not pleasing to You I surrender to You with all my love. Thank You that You care about my character and maturity as a loving Daddy God. Search my heart and know me for I desire to know You and love You, not with mere words but as a yielded, humble, listening child who has put You first above all else. You are altogether lovely.

Oh Father, may my prayers be pleasing to You! I am speaking to You from deep down in my heart. I want to walk with You so closely that Your very heart is moved to tears because You have a found a true friend. Speak openly to me whatever is on Your heart. Speak, Lord, for thy servant is listening. . .

THE WINDS

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is upon me, for the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted and to proclaim that captives will be released and prisoners will be freed (Isaiah 61:1).

Is it? Is the Spirit of the Lord truly upon us today? Are we hungry for the real, genuine breath of the Holy Spirit blowing upon our lives and then using us to take that mighty wind to a barren land?

"I desire to transform this earth with fresh wind," says the Lord. "I am not in the form and emptiness of man's agenda—nor do I desire a church without power. Like a tree shaken by a mighty wind, I will shake all that can be shaken, but as I do, I will refresh My people once again if they have open hearts that desire Me."

As the world gets darker and many within the church fall asleep and replace the power of God with a form of godliness, I hear the Lord say, "I will raise up a church within the greater church that knows what it means to seek hard after me with all of their hearts. And I will blow upon them with fresh wind and they will go BY MY SPIRIT and bring good news to the poor and bind up the brokenhearted; they will proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prisons to those who are bound! I will have an overcoming church," proclaims the Lord, "like a wheel within a wheel, and I will release the winds, for I am the Sovereign LORD!"

CONSUMED

Here's the goal: to be so consumed with Him that nothing else really matters; to anticipate even a few moments in His presence where you catch a glimpse of His beauty; to see His train fill the temple as every fiber of your being trembles at His mighty power and glory; to sense a flood of divine love being released in the secret place that the sound of mighty waters would be heard in the spirit, as deep calls out to deep. I desire an open heaven as I continue a passionate pursuit of the Lord Jesus Himself. Not His hands or the blessing He can provide, but to seek after Him alone. For as I seek Him I shall indeed find Him, and as I find Him I will treasure Him and want more. So, thirsty for more, I run. I embrace—and I dwell.

KING OF GLORY

Our King is full of mercy and goodness—slow to anger and quick to forgive. He embraces me with love and takes great delight in me. He invites me to eat at His table where I feast on His presence. He serves me with His own hand and gives me the key to His very heart. He yearns for me and delights Himself in me daily, in a thousand and a thousand ways He pours out His love to me. Oh, to know this King—the lover of my soul. To be so content that my heart would never stray. That faint-heartiness would never dwell near me, nor lukewarmness motivate

me. Quicken me, King Jesus. Make me come alive in You as I bask continually in Your majestic, holy presence. Let the King of Glory come in.

Run to His presence today no matter how you feel. We don't go by feelings but place our hope in Him alone.

THE YEARNING

God is always yearning for us to enjoy Him and cherish Him—more than we even realize. He is our constant companion and desires time with us even more than we want it ourselves. As we seek Him as our very breath, we will find Him. Pursue God today—as He is passionately pursuing *you*! Seek and you will find! Can you hear Him calling, "Come away with me, my love"?

My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away (Song of Solomon 2:10).

THE PLACE OF DEPENDENCE

"Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go" (John 21:18 (NIV)).

The Lord requires of true followers a higher kind of death. This kind of dying will glorify God and is only possible when we choose to follow hard after the Lord, leaving behind our own agendas and seeking His will. I am not speaking here of physical death but of a deeper consecration where one dies to the right to rule one's own life and follows hard after God.

In John 21:18 the Lord is sharing a truth with Peter, and within its words is a secret—a revelation for those of us

who live today. Here the Lord is saying in essence, "Peter, I am giving you this truth: once you grow in maturity you will move from a place of independence to one of increasing dependence instead of the other way around."

A small child is needy and dependent upon his mother, but as he grows older he becomes capable of living without constant parental supervision, even to the place where he can live independently and take care of himself.

Interestingly enough, it's just the opposite in the spirit realm. The more we mature in the things of God the more helpless we become, increasingly dependent on Him. We become "poor in spirit", bankrupt regarding our own self-sufficiency and strength. At that point we are convinced beyond a shadow of a doubt that, apart from His power, we can do nothing. Over time we learn that wisdom requires us to lean on the Lord, because without Him we are weak and vulnerable and prone to confusion, deception and failure, whereas when we attach ourselves to the True Vine, Christ Jesus, we are complete and competent to deal with whatever comes our way, and overcome.

The Lord desires to re-clothe us, removing our independent, self-assertive, all-knowing attitudes and clothing us with humility, dependence, and a meek and contrite heart. "But when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you."

Anything that is not of God is of the flesh and will hinder us from walking in power and anointing. It will also prevent us from hearing the still, small voice of the Holy

Spirit. As we lay down those things, He strips us of our old rags and clothes us in the beauty of holiness, as we yield to Him out of love and dependence, knowing that only in Him are we complete and victorious, able to live and move and have our being, all because He is the Life. In fact, our need for God grows with age if we can only admit it—as we become aware of how desperately we need Him, more every day.

Will we let the Lord exchange our rags for white robes? Will we allow Him to remove any garment of self and let Him lead us where we do not want to go? Warning: Our flesh is never happy when we yield to the Spirit to become needy children, dependent on our Father for even our very breath. In truth, He will often lead us down a difficult road, which we would never have taken on our own. But it's in this place of dependence and obedience that we are changed into His image, and become useful to His Kingdom, ready to answer when He calls us to that place of surrender, no matter what the circumstances.

It's in that place that we follow where He leads and let Him carry us through every situation. It's also in that place that we become more and more confident that He is a good God, who truly loves us more than we can humanly grasp, and that He will work out all things for our good and His purpose. That's the secret place of safety and rest, where nothing can touch us in the natural, because no matter what happens our focus is on Him alone, as we lean on His breast and feel the beat of His heart. Can you imagine a better place to be?

VISITATION

The Lord will come to announce His presence to you during inconvenient times. This is a test to see if you are willing and obedient to respond when He calls you away. **"Behold He stands at the door and knocks. . ."** (Rev 3:20) To make this practical, let me illustrate: You are sitting somewhere and suddenly you have a urge to be alone. You have a quiet presence that builds and a burning desire to be with God. This is the Lord announcing His presence to you and gently knocking on your door, bidding you to come away with Him. Often, the Lord comes at inconvenient times because He is asking us, "Do you love me MORE than this?" Will we ignore Him or obey?

Our love for God is proven by our obedience to His calls above any person or thing. My friends, there is nothing better than the Lord coming in visitation and announcing His presence to us. The knocks of the Lord can be a song, a literal knocking, a whisper in your spirit man to come away, or a quiet desire to be alone to hush your soul and listen. When these knocks come, remove yourself from distractions and come away. YOU have an audience with the Lover of your soul—Jesus.

Lord, I will not ignore You. May I never keep You waiting.

RESTING PLACE

God is pouring out His Spirit upon the spiritually thirsty and the spiritually discontent. The lukewarm, apathetic spirit is being rejected by His Bride. There is pre-qualification to be a resting place of His presence. In these last days, the Lord is creating resting places connected to the throne. As we give the Lord the right to move and reign as He desires in our churches and lives, He will come in and rest there. He will yearn to be in a place that loves and welcomes Him. Be such a person, one that lives and seeks Him wholeheartedly. Resting places are already forming in this last hour. The manifest presence is building.

In the midst of it all
He stands.
In the shadow of His wings
I abide.
I will not hide my face.
As my eyes fill with tears,
My Jesus is watching nearby.
Set fire to my heart, oh Lord,
That you become my soul's delight,
That forever I may dwell
In your glorious, beautiful sight...

ROAR

I hear the Lord whisper over you today:

"Behold, I the Lord will shut the mouths of the lions!"

"Be not afraid, My child, and do not shrink back in fear. For the lions may come to paralyze you with fear and doubts. They come to bully and intimidate, proclaiming: 'Your situation will NOT change. The Lord is too busy with others to care about you!' This is a lie! For the Lord has already released His angels to stand guard and protect you and HE will shut the mouths of the lions!"

"I hear a roar coming forth—the roar of the Lion of Judah! Those who once held back with fear and weakness are now letting loose a mighty roar! Christ, the Lion of Judah, is roaring through you!"

"I can see the tables turning!"

"NOW it is the enemy and his little impostor lions that are shaking in fear at the very sound of that ROAR! Behold the Lion of Judah!"

"I will open your eyes in the spirit and you will see the mouths of the lions shut as they bow to My name! I will roar through you and you will NOT be shaken! Stand up, square your shoulders and roar! I am with you, and you will not be denied."

GARDEN OF FELLOWSHIP

"I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse" (Song of Solomon 5:1 a).

His Presence holds a special invitation. You will find Him waiting in the garden of fellowship as He longs to hear from you. Come away as He bids you to draw near. He yearns for your loving touch and the sound of your feet striding ever closer. The anticipation builds as you draw near. His heart is deeply touched that you left your daily routine to spend a little time with the Lover of your soul. It is in that place that you are forever changed! It is in that place that you move the heart of God.

GOD'S ICU

"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me'" (Matthew 25:40).

In a recent vision, I saw a man rushed into the ICU by EMTs. Only moments earlier he was badly injured in a collision with a semi, and now the EMTs flash each other knowing looks, certain that he is a dead man. It is only a matter of time. In the ER, doctors frantically work on him, trying to stop the bleeding and stabilize his erratic vital signs, while his loved ones sit, terrified, in the waiting room, bracing for bad news. Suddenly, Jesus walks into the ICU and touches the man, instantly restoring him

to perfect health. I heard the Lord ask, "Is there a place where the *spiritually* injured can go to heal?"

We as the body of Christ are the place the injured are supposed to go to heal. We are the ones He has anointed to share the good news of the gospel, to encourage, to touch and love back to health and strength—to empower. We are His hands extended. We are to be whatever God calls us to be, in the moment, as we listen for His voice and simply obey, saying only what He wants us to say, just as Jesus did. We are to be the hospital, the place of hope, so let's lay aside the distractions, and live out our destiny—to cast out demons, to heal the sick, to raise the dead, and show people that Jesus is alive and well and loves them more than they could ever dream. If we don't, who will?

I sense the Lord saying:

"These desperate ones are in My heart right now; they need 'spiritual medics' filled with compassion to come to them with words of healing and hope. They need gentle, intensive ministry. In the Old Testament there were whole cities, called 'cities of refuge', where the needy could go to recover. Let My church be a city of refuge where recovery, healing, and restoration take place, nurturing back to health every wounded warrior regardless of how his wounds came about."

"I have called the church to be a Bethesda—a place where the hurting can come and find healing; a place where the worst of the worst can receive mercy and forgiveness. When you, as My people, feed the hungry,

heal the wounded, and love the lost, you are doing My will. So step out and let Me use you now!"

HIDDEN AWAY

Hold on to the incredible truth that you are hidden away in the garden of the Lord. Your heavenly Bridegroom knows your name, and His sweet presence embraces you with such tenderness and love that other things pale in comparison. Even if your name is never shouted from the rooftops on Earth, you can rest as you hear your Bridegroom tenderly whisper your name in the secret place. His whisper touches your heart, reminding you that, like a pearl of great price, He is all you need. He is altogether lovely. He alone satisfies your soul and fills it with His good treasures, enabling you to live out His desires and to ultimately fulfil His incredible plan for your life.

“My beloved thrust his hand through the latch-opening; my heart began to pound for him.”

(Song of Solomon 5:4)

THE WILDFLOWERS...

Jesus said, **"Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you"** (Matthew 6:33). In essence, Jesus was cautioning us not to be overwhelmed by life, but instead make God's Kingdom our highest priority. Whether you're challenged by overwhelming bills, finding the right mate, job issues, church issues or any other issues, seek the Lord's face first. He knows what you need. He knows what is deep in your heart. If He looks after the wildflowers and sparrows, He will surely look after you. Don't worry so much about today, beloved, God is still on the throne.

Matthew 6:33 (MSG)

30-33 **"If God gives such attention to the appearance of wildflowers—most of which are never even seen—don't you think he'll attend to you, take pride in you, do his best for you? What I'm trying to do here is to get you to relax, to not be so preoccupied with getting, so you can respond to God's giving. People who don't know God and the way he works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how he works. Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don't worry about missing out. You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met."**

CRYING OUT WITH A DESPERATE HEART

That sad, exhausted woman was desperate—
so sick and weak.
She heard that Jesus was passin' by
so she pushed through the crowd.
"Don't be rude!" said those shoving right past her.
Yet she cried out with ALL her heart, "If I could just touch the hem of His garment. . ."
When she touched Him, Jesus quickly turned around and proclaimed, "Somebody touched me."
She knelt there weeping. "Oh Lord. Oh Lord, Oh Lord, I am desperate for You. I knew if I could just touch the hem of Your garment I would be made whole."
Virtue flowed from the Master.
Her life never the same.
He stopped for the ONE,
A desperate heart
Moving in faith.
Are you weary?
He will stop just for you.
Cry out with a desperate heart,
Pursue Him,
Catch His loving gaze,
For He's already looking your way.
He is everything you need!

MAJESTIC ONE

Majestic one
Radiant Son
Behold His face
Abounding grace
Full of splendor
Heart so tender
Full of power
The Wayside flower
Fiery eyes
Redemptive skies
Life-giver
Flowing river
Hold my heart
Never part
Forever more
I will adore
Bended knee
Hear my plea
Majestic one

BOW BEFORE HIM

Bow before the Lord. Worship Him with adoration. Express the depth of your love for as you express your heart, your deep need for God is birthed. Bow low before the Lord and worship Him, admitting that you're bankrupt without Him.

As you kneel in humble adoration of the Father, He feeds your spirit with divine manna from on high. You will be amazed at the spiritual download you receive. As you seek after the Lord first, He gives you beauty for ashes—divine presence and strength, love overflowing, and divine power from His mighty right hand.

Seek the Lord while He can be found; worship at His feet, and stay there until you are transformed by His love.

PAINFUL PREPARATION

The Lord desires to lavish you with His peace and joy. For in His presence is the fullness, where there is nothing missing and nothing broken. Have courage today, beloved, for you shall be rewarded with grace. You are in the day of preparation. It is never easy to prepare. It requires pain, and no one likes to hurt. The testing seems cruel, but actually it is perfect preparation for the anointed life work that you are going to do. You will not understand now why you're facing such a test, but know that, in the fullness of time, the Lord will reveal to you this divine mystery. Know

that your prayers are being answered, but not necessarily in the way that you think. You feel pain, but the Lord sees beauty that will come out of this situation. Life is temporary but the inner beauty from the ashes is eternal.

SHUT IN WITH ME

"I am calling you," says the Lord, "to a new season of being shut in with Me alone. I will lead you through the storms, and My presence will comfort you through every trial. I have ordered your steps and certainly I will guide you through these trials. I am creating a deep friendship with you. For I desire for you to love and follow Me and to serve Me with all of your heart. I know life can be difficult, and I know you feel alone, but I am calling you to be shut in with Me alone, for it is there that I will give you a personal revelation of Myself. The greatest treasure ever is the revelation of My heart. It is to be sought after like great riches, for within Me is everything you will ever need. Come away with Me, my love, and let us sit together in sweet communion as I reveal layer upon layer of My love for you."

SPREAD THE LOVE

The Lord has called you to help and save others. We should never let one day go by when we have not embraced others with the love of Christ. Take the joy of the Lord—the joy found in His presence—and give it

away. Even as rays of sunlight produce warmth and light, the love you share brings hope and inspiration. Smile, do random acts of kindness, and watch God use you beyond what you could ever imagine. You say you feel unqualified? Know this—that He will fill your mouth with anointed words that you may be an instrument of God's love to the hurting; that you may become a fisher of men. Be God's Helping Hand that reaches out to the helpless to bring strength, courage, faith and love. Let Him use you to make others smile, laugh, have courage and faith in Him. Do not look to your own sorrow; rather focus on others, for certainly God will rescue you from your own issues. He will sustain you. He will remove the burdens and place a mantle of joy upon you, for as you take care of God's children, He will take care of you.

LORD, I SEEK THEE

When we seek the Lord we do so not in vain. As we wait on Him with a longing in our heart; as we cry at His feet, desperately desiring Him alone, certainly He will answer. For the Lord desires for us to seek after Him—a radical pursuit indeed. Dismiss from your mind any thoughts that come to distract you or to say you're wasting your time, for this is the enemy's greatest lie. The truth is that you are breaking ground in the spirit when you seek after the Lord even when you feel like nothing is happening. Is the sound of the Lord just a faint echo in your heart, or can you hear the sound of His presence, where love and beauty are unfolding right before you?

Seek the Lord; pursue Him; run after Him, for He rewards those who diligently desire Him.

BE NOT AFRAID

I see the great clouds that seemed to envelop you. I see that you feel afraid, but I want you to know that God is your deliverer. He will deliver you. Fear not, dear one. Trust in Him, for His death on a cross was to save this world, including you, which means He feels your pain. Did He not feel great pain and sorrow in the garden? Was He not despised, judged, crucified, buried, and betrayed to lead you out into a place of peace and stability? Remember that all your trials are training grounds for your future.

STAY CALM

It is vital that you keep your inner man at peace—that you are not ruffled or panicked by the chaos building around you. Leave all your concerns at His feet and seek His presence first, for it is there where you are able to be at peace, knowing He has your life in the palm of His hand. Do not fret; embrace the absolute peace that comes from abiding in Him. Allow His presence to be poured forth into your spirit. Abide in Him; dwell in the secret place and watch His presence bring about the fullness of everything you need.

WAITING HEART

The Lord is searching for a listening ear that He may speak His heart. He is looking for a waiting heart that He may come and commune with you. Wait in His presence, knowing the inner longing of your heart is compelling you to stay. Within the crowds of people, the Lord is standing, asking you to follow Him that you may go to a quiet place to rest—to hear His heart, to see His face that He may comfort you. Dwell with Him there and in that special garden you will gain much wealth in the spirit as you listen.

STRENGTH

"...but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles;they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31).

Did you know that had you not come to the Lord to renew your strength, you would have been easily crushed under the weight of the cares of the world? As you spend time with Him in His presence, He strengthens you and gives you renewal that goes beyond human understanding. This world is full of spiritual sickness; if men would only come to the Lord and wait on Him, they would not fail but rise up with wings like eagles; they would run and not faint.

A HEART THAT SINGS

The Lord is beside you to bless you and bring you the help you need, so do not waver for all of your prayers have been heard. The power of God is at hand and He will surely save you. Hold steady and watch God move on your behalf; let this be your battle cry that Christ is your friend, that victory is yours, that your heart can sing, for the power is the Lord's and the earth is His footstool. A heart that sings will not be denied, for He inhabits the praises of His people.

THE POWER OF THE CROSS

The cross cries out, "Victory!" Death, where is your sting, for Christ crushed death with resurrection power. There is power in the cross, and there is power within you in the Person of the Holy Spirit. That same resurrection power that raised Christ from the grave dwells in you. Are you struggling with the death of a marriage, finances, job, a relationship? Then look no further than the cross, for certainly you can tap into resurrection power. When that happens you will come back stronger, more powerful, completely restored through the power of the cross. That Old Rugged Cross did not defeat the Lord; rejoice, for you are on the winning side.

Only when I'm content to tarry in His presence AND STAY THERE will I be equipped to carry His presence to the world.

CRUCIFY

"Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Galatians 5:24).

The Lord desires to bring a further crucifixion within your life to prepare you for the work He has called you to. The Lord desires you to dig deep to deal with self. Self desires its own way and expresses itself in the law of self-preservation, which is a very powerful motivator. Crucifying self can be extremely painful; in fact, the instinct for self-preservation will try to kick in, but as we die to self and yield to the Spirit, seeking the Lord's highest, this extravagant love will bring forth a beauty that the world rarely sees.

WINDS OF LOVE

Gently the sun goes back into its rightful place.
I sit and wonder

How beautiful all creation sings of Your splendor.

You moved Your hand and created this bliss with a spoken word,

Yet with each minute that passed You thought of me.

Yes, I was on your mind when You created the trees, the sun, and the warm summer breeze.

How can it be? I am only ONE among so many, yet You tenderly call us all by name,

Knowing where we are, knowing where we live—nothing escapes You.

I want to see You walking with me now—I want to know You like never before.

Let the SON arise in His glory. May His warmth fill my heart to overflowing.

May His rays of light expose any darkness in me that I may be identified and transformed for all to see.

That the beauty of His presence would be here to stay. The winds of love will never blow away.

THE SINGLE EYE

"Behold, you are fair, My love! Behold, you are fair! You have dove's eyes." (Song of Solomon 1:15).

The Lord expresses His love to us and He stands back to see if we will have a single eye toward Him—where our focus will be upon Him alone. The Lord desires for us to gaze in His direction, to respond to His promptings with thanksgiving and worship, to minister to Him with our voices lifted in sweet adoration. He wants us to tell Him how much we desire His presence and for Him to

abide and dwell with us. He greatly desires to hear audible expressions of our worship toward Him, for they are like the sound of a turtle dove in His ears. It amazes me that I can bring Him such joy and satisfaction when He already enjoys the worship of all the hosts of heaven.

THE SECRET OF THE STAIRS

"O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret *places* of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely" (Song of Solomon 2:14).

The Lord desires to give us a deeper revelation of Himself. Instead of just head knowledge, He wants to give us an experiential and personal knowledge of Himself and His character—a deeper revelation of His presence and who He is as well as revealing His glory. He will reveal himself to hungry hearts and will take us into the secret of the stairs (Song of Solomon 2:14). The stairs signify our ascent toward Him level by level as He calls his bride up into a higher realm of intimacy with Him, beyond the limited experience of our past. He is calling His bride to arise and come away (Song of Solomon 2: 13). As we ascend the stairs, we are being weaned away from just the blessings and giftings to a greater dependency upon Him alone. Rise up into the chambers of the Lord, for He is calling you up the stairs. He bids you come.

TREASURES IN DARKNESS

"By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not" (Song of Solomon 3:1-2).

At times the Lord withdraws the sense of His presence and no longer responds quickly to our requests. He does this in order to create a hunger and thirst within us to seek after the Lord for Himself. At times we will face a night season—a time of spiritual darkness where we feel like the Lord is a million miles away, where we cannot feel His presence near. But I want you to know, beloved, that there is treasure in the darkness because it is there that we realize how desperately we really want and need our Bridegroom. In this place we will rise up with intensity, seeking after the Lord earnestly for Himself. This will result in a lasting personal revelation of the Lord that will captivate and astonish lukewarm Christians around you. You will speak with authority because it is within the night season that passion is created. There is treasure in the darkness. Rise up; it is time to seek the Lord while there's still time. Do not delay because time is short. It's now or never.

SEPARATE UNTO THE LORD

"A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed" (Song of Solomon 4:12).

The Lord is wooing His bride from the world that He may have a personal closeness with her. There is a high level of communion available if we will not become satisfied with our current level of intimacy. The Lord always has something better for us, but we must become dissatisfied with what we have and allow our spiritual hunger to develop, motivating us to search with great intensity for that deep communion with the Lord. His manifest presence can become intimately known if we desire it with all of our hearts. So separate yourself unto the Lord and give Him first place. Tear down any idol that would hinder your spiritual progress and run into the arms of a loving Lord.

CHASTENING

"...because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son" (Hebrews 12:6).

If we wander away from the Lord or settle for second best He will begin to chasten us. But first we must give Him permission to do this; we must cry out to the Lord and ask Him to form us into His image in order to know the ways of the Lord and yearn to please only Him—that we would

become sensitive to His call and turn aside when He announces His presence. If we're sincere and desire more of Him, He will begin to chasten us, making us spiritually sensitive, easily quickened, yearning for more of Him. He wants to further develop us as we spend quality time in His manifest presence; as such it is vital that we embrace the chastening of the Lord. Allow the Lord to hold you accountable that you may become all He desires.

TRUST

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

When we cannot trace the Lord's hand, and we do not know what He is doing, it is often difficult to trust Him. When our circumstances are confusing we often lose our ability to trust. It is then that we need to completely commit ourselves into His hands, and then dwell there, resting in FULL SUBMISSION, giving Him our lack of trust, in order to go higher with the Lord. Sometimes we will have to face severe tests that we will not enjoy, but we must trust in the faithfulness and integrity of the Lord, for He knows what He is doing and can be trusted in every situation, no matter how difficult. Commit your life to the Lord. Place your circumstances in His hands and abide in Him, and in time He will reveal His divine purposes to you.

THE GIVER OF BLESSINGS

"Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love" (Song of Solomon 2:5).

"Blessed are those who listen to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway. For those who find me find life and receive favor from the Lord" (Proverbs 8:34-35).

The Lord is searching for someone special who can look past the blessing to the Giver of the blessing, and seek His face and not just His hands. It's easy to get caught up in the blessings that He provides and forget that the Lord is yearning for our affection. As we seek the Lord first, everything else will be added unto us. Do not become mesmerized by the apples on the tree, for the Lord desires for you to focus on His face, and as you do everything else will be added unto you. Sometimes we focus only on the blessings and anointing. But we are to go past His hands and straight to His heart, for as we gaze into His loving eyes that blaze like fire, the Giver of blessings will become the greatest gift we could ever possess.

3 CONFESSIONS

The Shulimite was initially only concerned with knowing where the Lord was, and what He could offer her. The Lord accepted this reality, and allowed the bride to have all of the apples (blessings) she desired. At the same

time, He began to woo her to Himself, by causing her to recognize His deep personal interest in her.

Notice the 3 confessions she made as their relationship deepened.

"My Beloved is mine, and I am His: He feeds among the lilies."

(Song of Solomon 2:16).

"I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies" (Song of Solomon 6:3).

"I am my Beloved's, and His desire is toward me." (Song of Solomon 7:10).

By her third confession (Song of Solomon 7:10) there arose within her a deep stirring toward the one who loved her best. She began to intensely desire "Him" rather than all the blessings He could give her. Even so, our Heavenly Bridegroom will have a bride who desires Him above everything and everyone else. Like a pearl of great price she will pursue Him, falling in love with His face rather than just His hands.

In our day, God must search ever further for those who seek Him for who He is

rather than just for the provision of His hand. It is that group who will then be able to minister to others who have yet to find Him but are spiritually hungry, seeking satisfaction—the real thing.

If this describes you, let the Lord lead you into your own personal "secret garden"—one He has custom-designed to meet your needs. It's in that place where He will meet you right where you are and reveal Himself in ways you could never even imagine.

THE PEARL

The Lord is calling you to cultivate silence because God speaks when we are still. Quietness is like a soft wind that brings with it the message of the Lord to refresh the soul. When we are still we can know that He is God. In fact, He brings to us the very word of the Lord. Each word that He shares with you is like a pearl found in the secret place. Take time to meditate on those pearls. Don't be quick to run out of the secret place; stay there and remain still until the spirit of God speaks to your heart. Oh, how the Lord desires to speak to His children today. Will we listen?

"May the Lord bless you
and protect you.
May the Lord smile on you
and be gracious to you.
May the Lord show you His favor
and give you His peace"
(Numbers 6:24-26).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Refuge Ministries

Steve Porter is founder of Refuge Ministries. He believes that, through the presence of God, healing takes place. He has a passion for conducting presence-driven intimacy conferences, missions, and restoration ministry. He resides near Rochester, NY

Steve's Bio

Steve Porter has written many books and has a special anointing to bring forth the deep truths of the Spirit, with a clarity and simplicity that draws one up into a closer walk and deeper relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ. His speaking engagements take him internationally. Steve's passions are conference speaking and writing devotional books that draw the reader into the very presence of God. His latest devotional, *He Leads Me Beside Still Waters: 50 Love Letters of Healing and Restoration from Our Lord*, is a special prophetic devotional that will speak to your special needs. Steve's books, articles and videos have touched countless lives around the world. Steve is ordained through Parousia Ministerial Fellowship.

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